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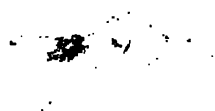


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11 June 1885





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REVIEW

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

LORD BYRON.

EXTRACTED FROM THE BRITISH CRITIC FOR APRIL, 1831.

By
Thomas Moore.

I.

Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life. By THOMAS MOORE. In 2 vols. pp. 823. London, Murray. 1831.

II.

The National Library. Conducted by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, and assisted by various eminent writers. No. I. The Life of Lord Byron. By JOHN GALT, Esq. London, Colburn and Bentley. 1831. 6s.

I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Comus.

2 LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. G. & F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,

AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1833.

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PREFACE OF THE EDITOR.

THE Criticism upon the Life and Character of Lord Byron, which is now republished, first appeared in the British Critic. That Review treats chiefly of Theological works. Hence, though conducted with eminent ability, its circulation is confined pretty much to the Clergy. The above article appearing to the present Editor calculated to render a general service to literature and to morals, he obtained permission to put it forth in its present form.

The works of Lord Byron are so much in the hands of almost every class of society, that it is highly important to point out his true principles and character. While his writings tend to render vice more attractive, by clothing it with gaiety and grace, it is well that the young should see it exhibited in himself, under its true features of wretchedness and deformity.

If it were possible that licentiousness, unbridled by a regard to religion or decency, unchecked by scantiness of means, and enhanced by wit, rank, and fame, could confer happiness, then Lord Byron had been blessed above all men. And when he sought to tempt others to his own course, he might have been only inviting them to a career, in which he had himself found contentment. And thus, though his writings would have still tended to the debasement of all that is good in human nature, he

might, in some sense, be acquitted of malevolence to mankind. But his amiable and judicious historian, anxious no doubt to preserve us from so fearful an error¹, though at the cost to his friend of being left without excuse, lifts the veil which the noble Poet had once dropped between his frailties and the world², and holds him up to that unenviable celebrity, which must ever be the meed of great talents, sullied by a narrow heart, and a profligate life. He has shown us, that, with every outward circumstance of advantage, vice does not, after all, confer happiness; that a contempt of religion neither proves nor promotes true greatness of mind. The man who did whatever fancy or passion prompted; who wasted not a moment, or thought, upon the good of others, but gave up his whole soul to self-indulgence, is seen devoured with spleen: he who brooked no restraint upon his will, from fear of God, or love of man, voluntarily endured painful, and even destructive abstinence, from the dread of growing fat! showing, to be sure, that the self-control necessary to virtue, is, after all, not so impracticable; but that its sanctions are too insignificant, forsooth, to engage attention from minds of noble aspiring and lofty flight.

Lord Byron having, upon his own showing, found disappointment and degradation to be the only fruits of dissolute principles and habits, what are we to judge of his heart, who could wantonly seek to propagate them, and pervert to this purpose the great talents entrusted to him for other ends? Is it the property of a generous, or of a heartless nature, to strive to allure others to a course proved, by personal experience, to be fraught with disgrace and misery? Milton will instruct us.

¹ And perhaps also to spur Mr. Murray's liberality, by the increased piquancy of the work.

² Lord Byron required the memoirs of himself, which he had entrusted to Mr. Moore for publication, to be destroyed.

The Editor is not one whose disposition leads him to war with the dead, or even with the living. But Lord Byron's genius has given his writings a dangerous sway over the minds of the young, and unborn ages may curse the witchery of his pen. The Editions of his works which have issued so rapidly from the press, prove the extensiveness of the mischief. And it is surely useful that the poison should not go unaccompanied by antidote; desirable, even, to apprise posterity, that the thinking few of this age could reprobate the mischievous example of the too popular Poet. There are not, indeed, wanting symptoms of an extensive disapprobation of the tendency of his writings. His great contemporary dedicated his equal powers to the advancement of virtue, and the improvement of social order; left not "one line which, dying, he could wish to blot." And while even-handed justice awards to each the praise of genius, a discerning nation finds, in their different *moral worth*, just ground for raising grateful monuments to the name of Scott, while she consigns over the fame of Byron to the hands of Mr. Moore¹.

Of this gentleman the reviewer takes some notice, and not undeservedly. He is one, who, with talents which opened to him every field of honourable ambition, every source of literary fame or profit, found it most congenial to his tastes, or thought it most conducive to his interest, to dabble in impurity and mischief. To prompt or palliate voluptuous passion; to fan the discontent of a people difficult at all times to govern, has been his chosen occupation, in story and in song. Loose or turbulent characters supplied the matter which he loved to picture

¹ A foreigner, lately travelling in this country, expressed his surprise at hearing so much every where of Scott, while the name of Byron was scarcely mentioned. The Editor furnished him with the above solution, which, as he was one of the worshippers of intellect, did not seem to give him entire satisfaction.

forth. And the biography of Sheridan, of Byron, and of Fitzgerald, shows the grounds of his selection; and, moreover, the advantage of obtaining it. Of the latter, if report say true, the family rue the hour in which they trusted to Mr. Moore records relating to one, of whom the well-judging friends must have wished the *political* history, at least, to perish with him ¹.

In the hope of promoting a correct estimate of the dead poet, and the living historian, and of perpetuating this knowledge, by enabling the possessors of their works to bind up with them this masterly sketch of their respective characters, it is presented to the public in its present form.

If it were at length discovered that revelation is certainly false; if it were proved beyond cavil that man's

¹ If the family of Lord Edward Fitzgerald sanctioned and assisted in Mr. Moore's history of their relation, the country has a heavy account to settle with them. In the hope that they did not, the Editor forbears to state the case, as it would stand against them. But if, on the other hand, the family papers were entrusted to Mr. Moore with other views; if it was matter of frequent consolation to Lord Henry Fitzgerald, the writer of the letter to Lord Clare, when, in his cooler moments, convinced that his brother had been justly, and even generously dealt with by the Irish government, that the letter had never been published, and, as he thought and intended, never would be; if no specific authority was given to Mr. Moore for its publication; then those members of the family who know, and disapprove what has been done, seeing the mischief Mr. Moore has sought, perhaps too successfully, to accomplish, by the aid of these papers, owe it to the public, owe it to the *Crown*, to come forward and clear themselves, however painful it may be to them to stir the memory of one whose name, with all his faults, must be still dear to them.

The Editor does not pretend to know, of a certainty, with whom the fault rests. But the nature of Mr. Moore's work, the time selected for its appearance, and what has been whispered respecting it, seem to him to justify this appeal. Explanation is necessary. The family requires exculpation, or Mr. Moore's fair fame should be cleared of the imputations attaching to it.

being ends here, that no after-reckoning is to be looked for; there yet would be required something to justify, in any man, the attempt to weaken the restraints of virtue, and augment the turbulence of unruly passion. They who, for want of better light, framed their estimate of human obligation from a consideration of human happiness, in this life only; who grounded duty on usefulness; came pretty much to the conclusions of Christian morality. We are yet to learn that any wise man among the heathen prescribed, for the well-being of society, or of individuals, the unchecked indulgence of the gross or violent passions. Yet if dissoluteness and sedition be not means to public or private good, what are we to pronounce of those who employ their talents to encourage them, through love or recklessness of ill,—for the sake of lucre, or of favour with bad men?

If any good be, after this life, proposed for man, whether what revelation holds out, or other; he will needs be in the best predicament for obtaining or enjoying it, who has carried his present nature to its highest excellence. And who is he? Shall we judge him to be of those who, retaining the form and endowments of man, have indulged merely animal propensities, and “taught others so;” or of those who have laboured painfully to make subject the lower appetites to reason, in themselves and in their fellows; to exalt the intellect, and purify the affections; to promote order, and improve happiness?

It may be thought that since Mr. Moore brings out to notice the vices of those whom he makes his subjects, he is entitled to the praise of a candid and moral historian. But such is not his temper. He holds up the lives of bad men, not as lighting a beacon to warn, but a meteor to allure. He selects unwholesome matter, and sublimes it to luscious poison. The mass of mankind delight in evil. And he writes to the mass to encourage them in evil, because, as it seems, his harvest of pelf, or of popula-

rity, is thus enlarged. Not that we may altogether insist on these, as his sole and necessary motives. All, perhaps, is not calculation. The natural bias of his heart may be on the side of vice and mischief. Certain, however, it is, that, from some cause, virtue and order have never his countenance.

REVIEW
OF THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
LORD BYRON.

WE do not know whether the public is one half so sick as we are of the apparently interminable inquest which has been sitting upon the case of this noble "Martyr of Genius," (as Mr. Moore is pleased to style him,) from the day of his decease unto the present hour. If we thought they were, we should most certainly abstain from the slightest notice of memoir, biography, or dissertation which might have for its object this extraordinary specimen of the human race. If all that has been written about him were collected into one mass, we suspect that it would present to us such a monument of restless idleness as the world has seldom seen. We doubt whether the appearance of the wandering Jew would have caused such an epidemic eruption of morbid curiosity. We know not where to look for an adequate illustration of it, but to the pages of the veracious *Hafen Slawkenbergius*. The frenzy spread among the good people of Strasburgh, by the stranger's mysterious importation from the promontory of Noses, is the only fit image of our universal fever of inquisitiveness. That the disorder is not yet materially abated seems pretty evident from the volumes

now before us, more especially from the work of Mr. Galt. It really is a very curious and instructive phenomenon. A "*National Library*" is prepared for the edification of the people of England, under the conduct of a minister of the national church: and the very first number of the miscellany is, what?—a history of some eventful period, big with the fate of our civil or religious liberties?—a biography of some brave and elevated spirit, who bore witness to the truth in the midst of persecution and torment? Nothing of all this. The opening article is a life of Don Juan! Other martyrs may, perhaps, follow in their turn: but the "Martyr of Genius" has, of course, the first claim on the admiration of the most intellectual public in the world. This claim being once satisfied, it was to be hoped that the public might have leisure for attending to a "History of the Bible," and to the labours and the lives of men of whom, the Bible tells us, "the world was not worthy." What can be more meet and right than that Childe Harold should take precedence of saints and apostles, of confessors and reformers? Do we not live under the dynasty of Intellect? and does not the sound of the sackbut and the psaltery summon us to fall down before the golden perfection which the monarch hath set up? And who is he that shall deliver us, if we are disobedient to the mandate?

With regard to Mr. Galt, however, it is but common justice to allow that his adorations are not, by any means, of so servile a cast as those of the multitude collected round the pedestal of this portentous image. He does not attempt to conceal from himself, or the public, that the *fine gold* may conceal a variety of much less precious materials. What the crowd of worshippers will say to this, we know not. The fiery furnace is blazing before him; and, perhaps, he may not escape without a slight experience of its fierceness. It is not our business, however, to bind him and cast him in. If his prostrations

are not sufficiently humble, we must turn him over to the tender mercies of his brother hierophants, whose faith and zeal appear to be of much more unquestionable purity. For ourselves, we have only to say that the service in which he is engaged does not appear to us very happily adapted to his powers. Among the writers of fiction, indeed, who are now actually swarming about the warm shallows of our modern literature, he holds a rank of no ordinary distinction. Of one of his achievements, in particular, he has ample reason to be proud. With an egotism entirely pardonable, he informs us, that Lord Byron "read his novel of the Entail three times, and thought the old Leddy Grippy one of the most *living-like* heroines he had ever met with¹." We cannot forbear to pause one moment to express our own full and cordial assent to this encomium. We do honestly think that it would scarcely be too much to pronounce this character to be among the most extraordinary creations in the whole range of modern fiction. Our judgment has been formed chiefly from the effect we ourselves experienced from its powers of entertainment. After once becoming fairly acquainted with that most delectable of ancient dames, we never witnessed her *entry* on the stage, without feeling a sort of tickling anticipation of delight; a gentle agitation of the diaphragm, preparatory to its subsequent convulsions. At the very mention of her name our lungs were instantly in readiness to *crow*; just as the pit and gallery are always in readiness to *go off*, the moment that Liston's countenance emerges from the side-scenes, and before one syllable has issued from his lips. The man who would achieve this, can be much better employed than in compiling biography, or spinning a cocoon of quaint and whimsical criticism. Only see how the author of "the Lairds of Grippy" can write, when

¹ Page 268.

he quits the element in which he is so thoroughly at home, and ventures into an entirely different region.

"There is no account of any great poet, whose genius was of that dreamy and *cartilaginous* kind, which hath its being in haze, and draws its nourishment from lights and shadows; which ponders over the mysteries of trees, and interprets the oracles of bubbling waters."

A dreamy genius is not, perhaps, altogether beyond comprehension. But what in the name of all that is dreamy and fantastical is a *cartilaginous* kind of genius? Again:

"It"—(the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers')—"was the first burst of that *dark*, diseased ichor, which afterwards coloured his effusions; the overflowing suppuration of that satiety and loathing, which rendered Childe Harold, in particular, so original, incomprehensible, and anti-social."

How could any writer think of patching up his composition with these vile rags from the hospital; these

ράκη βαρείας του νοσηλείας πλέα.

And then, just conceive a poem rendered original, incomprehensible, and anti-social, by an effusion of *pus* and *gore*! But this is nothing to what follows. The author is speaking of Lord Byron on board ship.

"He was often strangely rapt—it may have been from his genius; and—had its grandeur and darkness been then divulged—*susceptible of explanation*; but, at the time, it threw, as it were, around him the *sackcloth of penitence*. Sitting amidst the shrouds and rattlins, in the tranquillity of moonlight, *churning* an inarticulate melody, he seemed almost apparitional, suggesting dim reminiscences of him who shot the albatross. *He was as a mystery in a winding sheet, crowned with a halo!*"

Now what on earth can be the meaning of all this? A moody, silent, and somewhat unsociable young man is humming a tune to himself on the deck of a packet:

whereupon his companion invests him at once with the sackcloth of a penitent criminal. In the next sentence, however, the culprit becomes first a spectre,—then a mystery,—enveloped with a winding sheet, with a halo for his nightcap! Will any one be kind enough to render “*susceptible of explanation*” this most “incomprehensible phantasma”—(to use the author’s own words)—which “hovered”—(not “about Lord Byron”)—but about the cranium of his biographer? What would *the Liddy* say to all this? Would she not be more hopelessly lost in it, than ever she was even in “the bottomless pit of Lawyer Pitwinnock’s consulting room?” We should, truly, desire no better sport than that Mr. Galt himself should furnish us with a picture of the outbreaking of her spirit, on hearing any one of her own nephews, nieces, or grandchildren, giving vent to such fathomless and most prodigious nonsense!

We must, however, do him the justice to declare, that there is nothing else in the volume quite so bad as this. The work is, nevertheless, deformed, and rendered sometimes insufferably tedious, by a perpetual affectation of saying all manner of fine, and deep, and original things; by a resolution to speculate and analyze through thick and thin, until the ultimate texture of the mind and character of the poet is laid bare to the inspection of the reader. One would imagine that it were possible to trace the whole process of assimilation, through which all the multifarious elements upon which it dieted, were converted into nutriment by this mighty genius. His lordship himself once asked his friend Mr. Thomas Moore, whether he did not find that feeding upon beef-steaks made him ferocious? Much in the same spirit his biographer seems to question whether the “murk and the mist, and the abysm of the storm, and the hiding places of guilt,” and a vast many other articles of mental luxury, might not contribute to render his hero a prodigy of all

that is *incomprehensible and anti-social*. All that is gloomy or terrible in nature, or in man, is supposed to have been mixed up as it were by a sort of digestive energy, in the mental temperament and constitution of the bard. And the critic appears to be, throughout, so much in the secret of the whole proceeding, that he is continually interrupting his narrative in order to tell us how all this is ; how it is that the ingredients of sublimity and grandeur are imperceptibly absorbed into the intellectual system ; till we begin almost to fancy that we are on the very point of seeing the process by which a genius may become " dreamy and cartilaginous," or firm and vigorous, and full of muscle and tendon. The end, however, usually is, that we carry away with us about as much satisfaction and instruction as we should from an anatomical lecture which should attempt to follow the fibres of the bullock's rump into all the recesses and labyrinths of the animal economy, and to show that the inevitable result must be toughness of sinew, and blood-thirstiness of temper.

But what shall we say to good Master Thomas Moore—most Corinthian of Poets—most silver-tongued of advocates and apologists—most delicate and velvet-fingered manipulator of tender characters ? In sober verity we at first hardly knew how to trust ourselves within the sound of his syren cadences. We felt as if it would be needful for us to guard our credulous facility against the smoothness of his cajoleries, especially whenever he appeared to be more than usually " graceful and humane." Happily, however, our vigilance and caution turn out to be much less needful than we had anticipated. It is true that he has poured out, in vindication of his friend, many a sentence of most sonorous melody, in ambitious imitation of a certain celebrated orator, the founder of that noble art which " makes the worse appear the better reason." But then, with matchless effrontery, or infatuation, he has provided us, in abundant measure, with the

most infallible of all antidotes to this "delicious poison." The correspondence, and the journals, and the secret memoranda of the hero, are perpetually confronting themselves with the pleadings of his apologist. The documents of the advocate are eternally giving the lie to his sophistry. The features and attributes of the client are constantly peeping forth, in most sinister contrast with the florid graces of his devoted rhetorician. And what is the inevitable result of all this, but to render indelible the very worst impressions which the public have ever received respecting this extraordinary being? If time was beginning to spread its moss over the characters which speak of his infamy, here is a sort of old (or middle-aged) Mortality, with his hammer and his chisel, to pick it out, and deepen the letters, till they challenge every eye by their sharpness and freshness. And who can rise from their perusal without a full persuasion that genius has rarely been seen in more degrading combination with selfish and odious passions? It is to no purpose whatever for Mr. M. to insinuate, that, in favour of high talent, darkness may, now and then, be put for light, and light for darkness, without any very mischievous compromise of the truth. Every one who hears him will instantly recollect the words wherewith Boswell was once smitten down by Samuel Johnson, when he endeavoured to palliate the infidelities of a married woman;—"Never accustom yourself, Sir, to confound right and wrong; the woman's a ——, and there's an end on't." Even so, (while our liberal biographer is showing us that men of great intellectual powers are naturally haunted by ungovernable passions, and that stupendous genius may be allowed to confer some sort of privilege and immunity on atrocious wickedness)—even so will the facts and the records here produced, compel every honest man to exclaim, nearly in the words of Samuel Johnson—"the

man's a profligate, and there's an end on't." That there was in his original nature much that is amiable and generous, it might be unjust and absurd to question. But the hideous part of his history is, that he outlived this better portion of himself, just as other people outlive their frailties and their faults; nay, that he seemed, at last, with the frightful perverseness of a maniac, to cauterize or cut away whatever was healthful in his system, and carefully to preserve whatever had been touched by the leprosy or the gangrene. He appeared to get more and more ashamed of virtue as he grew older; till, in his latter days, he used her as his bye-word. "As ugly as virtue" was, in his mouth, a description of all that is homely and repulsive. The form of every thing that is morally beautiful and grand, indeed, never ceased to live in his mind; just as perfection lives in the imagination of any other artist. But in his own person, he came to shrink from the imputation of respectability and worth, as he would from that of mediocrity and dulness. We have been told, indeed, that there runs throughout his character "*a vein of repentance*." We can perceive nothing of all this in the pages before us. If he repented of any thing, it was of the weakness of his early prepossessions in favour of what is *just and lovely, and of good report*. He resembled those persons who, receding constantly further from the excellence they once revered, were decorated by some ancient fathers with the uncereimonious title of "*the Devil's penitents*." But let us, with the materials now supplied to us, venture on a rapid survey of the career of this singularly and most unhappily gifted being.

The founder of his family, Ralph de Burun, came with the Conqueror into England; and of this noble lineage the poet is said to have been prouder than of writing Childe Harold. His grandfather was the celebrated

Admiral Byron. His grand uncle achieved notoriety by slaying his relative and neighbour, Mr. Chaworth, in a duel, or a brawl; and his father became equally notorious as one of the most selfish and worthless prodigals in the annals of the polite world. He seduced the Marchioness of Caermarthen "under circumstances which have few parallels in the licentiousness of fashionable life. The meanness with which he obliged his wretched victim to supply him with money would have been disgraceful to the basest adulteries of the cellar or the garret. A divorce ensued; the guilty pair were married; but within two years after, such was the brutal and vicious conduct of Captain Byron, that the ill-fated lady died literally of a broken heart, after having given birth to two daughters, one of whom still survives."—(Galt, p. 9.) This achievement did not deter Miss Catherine Gordon, of Gight, from venturing on this incomparable Lothario. She was a lady of honourable birth, respectable fortune, and most execrable temper. She married Captain Byron, and became mother of the poet. Her union was most inauspicious. It was the signal for a general invasion by the creditors of the bridegroom. Cash, Bank-shares, and fisheries, instantly were swept away. A voracious mortgage was fixed upon the land; and within a year afterwards the estate of Gight was swallowed up whole, or at least with the exception of a small trust in favour of Mrs. Byron, who was thus reduced from affluence to 150*l.* a year. On the 22nd January, 1788, she gave birth to her only child, George Gordon Byron, who, it must be confessed, entered on this breathing world with no very promising omens. His father was a reprobate—his mother was a virago—his maternal inheritance was ruined—and (to complete the evil aspect of his nativity) his fair proportions were curtailed and mutilated. By an accident which occurred nearly at the time of his birth,

one of his feet suffered a distortion which no surgical skill could ever remedy¹.

His mother was excessively fond of him, but nevertheless, it would seem, tormented him almost beyond endurance. Her passions were often absolutely uncontrollable; and, in her paroxysms, she would sometimes taunt the unhappy boy with his deformity, thus adding venom to the sting of a misfortune which rankled bitterly in his mind till the end of his existence. At eight years old he was violently in love—so violently, that when he heard of the marriage of the young lady many years afterwards, the intelligence nearly choked him, to the horror of his mother, his own astonishment, and the incredulity of every one else. His other emotions were equally vehement; for Mr. Moore tells us, that there exists at Aberdeen, to this day, a china saucer, out of which he actually had bitten a large piece, in a fit of rage, during his childhood.

In 1798 his granduncle died, upon which his mother removed with the young Lord to Newstead Abbey, which then presented an aspect of grievous desolation. After the fatal affray with Mr. Chaworth, the old peer had retired from the world, and fallen into a strangely eccentric, and unsocial course of life. During his latter years, his sole companions consisted of a colony of crickets, whose allegiance and fidelity he is said to have won so completely, that, at the death of their patron, the despairing reptiles quitted the premises, in a body, chirping out, we may suppose, "*Eamus omnes execrata civitas.*" Worse than all this, he converted the estate into an inheritance of ruinous litigation, and consigned its grounds to a state of neglect which rendered them unfit for any but crickets

¹ It is, however, the opinion of Mr. Millengen, that the defect was congenital.—*Memoirs on Greece*, p. 143.

to inhabit. What, therefore, with a vixen of a mother,—a mad capricious savage for his predecessor,—and a dilapidated property,—together with a keen sense of the honours of high ancestry, it must be confessed that his lot was cast in an atmosphere and a soil much less happily fitted for the cultivation of the gentler qualities, than for the development of those moody eccentricities which afterwards separated him from his country, and almost from his species.

It may as well be noticed here, once for all, that his unfortunate lameness was probably at the bottom of those waters of bitterness which were in after life perpetually overflowing in his character. The anguish and humiliation occasioned by this deformity were such as he never had magnanimity enough to overcome. In one of his own memoranda, he describes the horror and mortification which came over him, when his mother, in one of her fits of passion, called him a *lame brat*. The same agony was constantly breaking forth throughout the rest of his days. It may be said that he never forgave Nature or Providence this fatal injury. It was one main, though secret cause, which armed his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. He felt it as other people feel a wrong. It kept him, we are persuaded, in an almost perpetually *vindictive* frame of mind. It was the *thorn in the flesh* sent, like the messenger of Satan, to buffet him incessantly, and against which, unhappily, he was not provided with any defensive or antagonist principle. Other men, of no sluggish temperament, have been known to disregard their own personal blemishes, and even to convert them into occasions of merriment: and whenever this is the case, it is always considered as an indication of something amiable or noble in the character of the sufferer. It is hailed as a palpable victory over selfishness and egotism. But God help the man who is visited with any such defect or infirmity, if

the necessity of perpetually shining in the eye of the public happens to enter into his scheme of happiness! Such a man is sure to be at the mercy of looks, and whispers, and shrugs, and monosyllables. He lives the life of a martyr without the spirit of a martyr; and the consequence must naturally be, that he will never be thoroughly at peace with himself or with mankind.

In 1799, Byron was sent to school at Dr. Glennie's, at Dulwich, his mother having removed to London for the benefit of the best advice for his lameness. The school-master often found the parent more difficult to manage than the boy. Two years afterwards he was sent to Harrow, "as little prepared," says Dr. Glennie, "as it is natural to suppose from two years of elementary instruction, thwarted by every act which could estrange the mind of youth from preceptor, from school, and from all serious study." But here we must pause a moment, that we may not lose the benefit of Mr. Galt's speculations. Having first remarked that the childhood of Byron was not remarkable for any symptoms of generous feeling, and that "silent rages, moody sullenness, and revenge, are the general characteristics of his conduct as a boy," he proceeds to enrich the world with certain ingenious speculations on the mental character of the poet.

"Genius," he tells us, "of every kind, belongs to some innate temperament, and is an ingredient of mind more easily described by its effects than its qualities. It is as the fragrance, independent of the freshness and complexion, of the rose; as the light in the cloud; as the bloom on the cheek of beauty, of which the possessor is unconscious, until the charm has been seen by its influence on others; it is the internal golden flame of the opal; a something that may be abstracted from the thing in which it appears, without changing the quality of the substance, its form, or its affinities."

It is to be presumed that the reader, by this time, has a very distinct and vivid conception of what is to be understood when we talk of genius. If not, he must be

pronounced to be absolutely metaphor-proof, and in that case we can do nothing for him. If, however, the above figures have duly discharged their office, it can hardly be doubted that they will enable him easily to see his way to Mr. Galt's *obvious* conclusion.


"I, therefore,"—(that is, *because* genius is like the fragrance of the rose, and the bloom of beauty, and the light on the cloud, and the flame of the opal)—"I, *therefore*, am not disposed to consider the idle and reckless childhood of Byron as unfavourable to the development of his genius; but, on the contrary, inclined to think that the indulgence of his mother, leaving him so much to the accidents of undisciplined impression, was calculated to cherish associations, which rendered them, in the maturity of his powers, ingredients of the spell that ruled his memory."

From all which, it clearly appears, how thankful we ought to be that Lord Byron was a spoiled child, since otherwise, peradventure, he might have turned out a spoiled poet. With the profoundest gratitude, therefore, to the capricious fondness of his parent, we proceed with our tale.

At Harrow, according to his own account, Lord Byron was unpopular, capricious, turbulent, and rebellious; impatient of continuous drudgery, but collecting large and various stores of information, by desultory exertion; reading *when* no one else read, and *what* no one else thought of reading; betraying, to all appearance, the embryo powers of an orator rather than a poet; passionate alike in his friendships and aversions; but throwing out occasional flashes of magnanimity and heroism. In 1803, during his schoolboy days, he was seized with another violent fit of love, being the *third* affair of the heart with which he had been visited. The object of this attachment was Miss Chaworth, the heiress of Annesly, in the immediate neighbourhood of Newstead. The young lady was two years older than himself, and was but little impressed by the attention of her juvenile admirer. His

manners were then rough and odd, and, combined with his personal defect, and his lack of years, rendered his passion hopeless, if not absolutely ridiculous. He, one night, overheard the damsel saying to her maid, "Do you think I care any thing for that lame boy?" This speech, as may well be imagined, was like a shot through his heart. Though the hour was late, he instantly darted out of the house, and scarcely knowing whither he ran, never stopped till he found himself at Newstead. One would suppose that this was a chilling blast, strong enough to extinguish the hottest passion. But it was not so. There is reason to believe that the fire was in his heart for the remainder of his days. "Our union," he says in one of his memorandum books, "would have healed feuds in which blood had been shed by our fathers; it would have joined lands broad and rich; it would have joined at least *one* heart, and two persons not ill matched in years;—and—and—and—what has been the result?" The result, if we are to believe him, was, that *her* marriage was any thing but a happy one; and that his early disappointment gave a darker and more cheerless colouring to his whole existence.

There is something at once ludicrous and frightful in the accounts preserved to us of his own temper about this period, especially when brought into collision with that of his lady mother. The explosions produced by the encounter of these hostile elements were occasionally quite terrific. Each, it seems, was fully aware of the presence of the electric principle in the other: and as a proof of this, it is told, that one evening, after a tempestuous eruption of tremendous violence, each party went, privately, to the apothecary, anxiously inquiring whether the other had been to purchase poison, and cautioning the vendor of drugs on no account to attend to such an application, if made. On one occasion, the poker and tongs became the winged messengers of ma-



ternal wrath, and nothing but a precipitate retreat could save the filial cranium from fracture. Of his residence at the university little is known that is eminently worthy of remark. It is said that he kept a bear, as a sort of satirical emblem of certain venerable personages *levant and couchant* in those retreats. Of his pursuits and recreations at this period of his life, however, this much at least is clearly ascertained;—that they betrayed a most incredible coarseness of taste. To use his own language, “the flash and the swell” seem to have exercised a most ignoble dominion over his fancy. Cock-fighting, pugilism, pistol-firing, and revelry, were the things which formed the chief solace of this haughty patrician. There was, even then, a taint of lowness about his pleasures, which we know not how to describe, but by applying to them the technical appellation of *verminism*; and which indicated a grossness and a rankness, at strange variance with that sensitive delicacy, which has sometimes been described as the prevailing attribute of his character. It was at the university, too, that he surrendered up his faculties to the predominance of a well-known atheist and libertine, before whom, he confesses that his own genius stood rebuked, and whom, in one of his letters he describes as formed “to display what the Creator *could make* his creatures,” as having “the stamp of immortality in all he did or said,”—and the loss of whom he regarded as a bewildering dispensation, enough of itself to shake our trust in Providence! In 1807, he quitted Cambridge without any emotions of regret or gratitude; nay, with feelings of bitter aversion and contempt, if we may judge from a letter to his friend Mr. Harness, written afterwards, in 1809, in which he speaks of the university as an *injusta noverca* and an old beldam! It is not easy to imagine any thing much more despicably absurd than this eruption of petulance. For Lord Byron, of all

persons in the world, to make such a complaint, must surely "have required impudence at least equal to his other powers." It is tolerably well known that his "Beldam Stepmother" was the never-failing object of his contumely and insult during the whole of his residence. What might be the wrongs she inflicted on him it would puzzle the keenest ingenuity to divine, unless they were, that she refused to abandon her usages, or to remodel her institutions, in conformity with his profound wisdom and commanding range of experience. But he appears, very early in life, to have contracted a silly notion that every thing instituted must be wrong—the privileges of the aristocracy, and the *established* latitude of fashionable morality, always excepted.

But, however loose and desultory his intellectual habits may have been, he appears at this time to have amassed a stock of information that would have been extraordinary even for a youth of the most stubborn diligence. This may be learned from a list, scribbled hastily into his memorandum book, of the various writers he had then perused, in various departments of literature. The compass of his historical reading, more especially, is truly surprising. In divinity he enumerates only Blair, Porteus, Tillotson, and Hooker; "all," he says, "very tiresome." And then he adds, "I abhor all books of religion; though I reverence and love my God, without the blasphemous notions of sectaries, or belief in their absurd and damnable heresies, mysteries, and thirty-nine Articles;" a pretty vigorous *excursion* of all systems, for a mere stripling! The same sentiment is still more largely, though certainly not more powerfully developed in a poem of his dated, 29th December, 1806, entitled the Prayer of Nature, (vol. i. p. 106, 107) but much too long for insertion here—and also in the following extract from another of his early poems, written in 1807, and, as it would

seem, under the melancholy impression that he should soon die.

“ Forget this world, my restless sprite,
 Turn, turn thy thoughts to Heav’n :
 There must thou soon direct thy flight,
 If errors are forgiven.
 To bigots and to sects unknown,
 Bow down beneath th’ Almighty’s Throne ;—
 To him address thy trembling prayer ;
 He, who is merciful and just,
 Will not reject a child of dust,
 Although his meanest care.

“ Father of Light ! to thee I call,
 My soul is dark within ;
 Thou, who canst mark the sparrow fall,
 Avert the death of sin.
 Thou, who canst guide the wandering star,
 Who calm’st the elemental war,
 Whose mantle is yon boundless sky,
 My thoughts, my words, my crimes forgive ;
 And, since I soon must cease to live,
 Instruct me how to die. 1807.”

Both these are, assuredly, most remarkable performances. They exhibit that strange unnatural phenomenon, an infidel or sceptical boy. At that early age, as Mr. Moore very justly observes, the passions are, in general, sufficiently disposed to usurp a latitude for themselves, without taking a licence from infidelity to enlarge their range. But with Lord Byron, he adds, “ the canker showed itself in the morn and dew of youth,” when the effect of such “blastments” is, for every reason, “most fatal.” With regard to the spirit of “fervid adoration” displayed in these addresses to the Deity, strangely mingled up with his “defiance of creeds,” we apprehend it to be much the same thing with that, which is elsewhere termed by Mr. Moore, the “*poetry of religion* ;” and which is well known to be a feeling entirely compatible with the wildest excesses

of self-indulgence. A man may be lifted into ecstasies by the storied window and the dim religious light, by the pealing anthem and the full-voiced choir—or even by the prodigality and magnificence of visible nature; and the same man may, half an hour afterwards, be found in the gambling-house or the brothel. A man must be degraded almost to the level of a brute if he has no fits of religious emotion, no occasional stirrings within him which speak of something higher and holier than his mere animal nature; and what are these visitings, but *swift witnesses* against him, if he suffer their influences to waste themselves upon his nervous system, instead of taking them into the deepest recesses of his heart? As for the “defiance of creeds,” it generally means neither more nor less than a defiance of the opinions, and a contempt for the understandings of mankind, coupled with a fixed purpose to live after the sight of one’s own eyes, and the devices of one’s own heart. Such, most indisputably, was the meaning of the phrase in the present instance. The “spirit of adoration” soon began to “pale its ineffectual fires,” while the spirit of resistance to creeds, and to every moral or mental restraint, continued to grow with his growth, and to strengthen with his strength. Where the wind is sown, what but the whirlwind can be reaped? Let the harvest be described by Mr. Moore.

“To have anticipated the worst experiments both of the voluptuary and the reasoner, to have reached, as he supposed, the boundary of this world’s pleasures, and see nothing but clouds and darkness beyond, was the doom—the anomalous doom—which a nature, premature in all its passions and powers, inflicted on Lord Byron.”—P. 184.

The state of his feelings with regard to the university and its studies, and of his *opinions*—if he can be said to have had *opinions*—respecting the national *superstition*, will be seen from the following letter:—

“ *To Mr. Dallas.*

Dorant's, January 21st, 1808.

“ SIR,

“ Whenever leisure and inclination permit me the pleasure of a visit, I shall feel truly gratified in a personal acquaintance with one whose mind has been long known to me in his writings.

“ You are so far correct in your conjecture, that I am a member of the University of Cambridge, where I shall take my degree of A.M. this term; but were reasoning, eloquence, or virtue, the objects of my search, Granta is not their metropolis, nor is the place of her situation an ‘*El Dorado*,’ far less an Utopia. The intellects of her children are as stagnant as her Cam, and their pursuits limited to the Church—not of Christ, but of the nearest benefice.

“ As to my reading, I believe I may aver, without hyperbole, it has been tolerably extensive in the historical; so that few nations exist, or have existed, with whose records I am not in some degree acquainted, from Herodotus down to Gibbon. Of the classics, I know about as much as most schoolboys after a discipline of thirteen years; of the law of the land as much as enables me to keep ‘within the statute’—to use the poacher’s vocabulary. I did study the ‘*Spirit of Laws*’ and the *Law of Nations*; but when I saw the latter violated every month, I gave up my attempts at so useless an accomplishment;—of geography, I have seen more land on maps than I should wish to traverse on foot;—of mathematics, enough to give me the headache without clearing the part affected;—of philosophy, astronomy, and metaphysics, more than I can comprehend; and of common sense so little, that I mean to leave a Byronian prize at each of our ‘*Almæ Matres*’ for the first discovery,—though I rather fear that of the Longitude will precede it.

“ I once thought myself a philosopher, and talked nonsense with great decorum: I defied pain, and preached up equanimity. For some time this did very well, for no one was in *pain* for me but my friends, and none lost their patience but my hearers. At last, a fall from my horse convinced me bodily suffering was an evil: and the worst of an argument overset my maxims and my temper at the same moment, so I quitted Zeno for Aristippus, and conceive that pleasure constitutes the *τὸ καλόν*. In morality, I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments, and Socrates to St. Paul, though the two latter agree in their opinion of marriage. In religion, I favour the Catholic emancipation, but do not acknowledge the Pope; and I have refused to take the Sa-

crament, because I do not think eating bread or drinking wine from the hand of an earthly vicar will make me an inheritor of heaven. I hold virtue in general, or the virtues severally, to be only in the disposition, each a *feeling*, not a principle. I believe truth the prime attribute of the Deity; and death an eternal sleep, at least of the body. You have here a brief compendium of the sentiments of the *wicked* George Lord Byron; and, till I get a new suit, you will perceive I am badly clothed. I remain," &c. —Vol. i. pp. 134, 135.

This precious epistle is illustrated by a sage and ample commentary of the biographer. Its odious flippancy upon sacred subjects, Mr. Moore is half disposed to palliate as a little sally of sportiveness, prompted by a design to astonish and *mystify* his prosy correspondent and adviser, Mr. Dallas. He addresses himself with more solemnity, to the task of vindicating the language of scorn and aversion with which it assails the university; and he seems to find great comfort and contentment in the recollection that this feeling of distaste for his "nursing mother" was entertained by his Lordship, in common with some of the most illustrious names of English literature. Milton hated not only Cambridge, but the very fields in its neighbourhood. Gray describes it as a place full of doleful creatures. The bigotry of Oxford was visited with the cool contempt of Locke; and Gibbon spat forth upon her the blistering venom of his malignity. All this is exceedingly consolatory; and the triumph is heightened by the facts, that Dryden had but little veneration for the university; and by the opinion of Bishop Hurd, that Addison was spoiled for a poet by "his constant and superstitious study of the old classics." Besides, Shakspeare and Pope, Gay and Thomson, Burns and Chatterton, &c. &c. attained their eminence without instruction or sanction from any college whatever. All which, we are told, demonstrates clearly, that a sort of inverse ratio may exist between college honours and genius, and "that a large subduction must be made from the sphere of that nursing

influence which the universities are supposed to exercise over the genius of the country."

Now how it is that Mr. Moore could thus give himself over to work all manner of imbecility with greediness, and to talk like a crude, ignorant, and shallow boy, utterly transcends our powers of comprehension! Certain highly-gifted individuals, it seems, have been known to vent some splenetic and hasty sentences against their Alma Mater; and these "follies of the wise" are to sanctify the petulance of all-talented young gentlemen, and to arm them with a licence to rail against discipline to the end of time! Again, to estimate highly the influence of the Universities over the national mind, is nothing better than a vulgar error; for, is it not undeniable that there are at least half-a-dozen great poets who never were at any University at all? Is it possible that the writer could be blind to the ignominious stolidity of all this pitiable drivelling? Has he yet to learn that Universities would still be exceedingly useful and valuable, even if it could be shown that they are not the best of all seminaries for the formation of *poets*; and that factious, moody, and self-willed young men may be intolerable nuisances, even though Milton and Locke may have despised authority, and spoken evil of dignities?

But we must hasten to the period which brought Byron before the public, and placed him eventually among the most splendid names of English literature. In 1808 came forth the "Hours of Idleness, by a Minor." The merciless and wanton chastisement of the Northern Inquisitors soon followed; and, assuredly, the soundest horse-whipping could not have roused the youthful patrician to more deep and deadly resentment. "A friend, who found him in the first moments of excitement, inquired anxiously if he had received a challenge—not knowing how else to account for the fierce defiance of his looks." The agony of the moment demanded immediate relief. The wrath-

ful *minor* accordingly called for claret, and swallowed three bottles to his own share ! This, however, was only a transient mitigation of the anguish. Nothing could effectually assuage it but deeds of vengeance. He sat down to his satire, composed twenty lines, and—"found himself considerably better !" The blow he had received was like that of the hammer on the detonating pulvil. It brought out the fiery element that was latent in his composition ; and the explosion which followed was heard throughout the realm. The critics had soon reason to repent of their rash severity ; and, what is still more remarkable, the poet himself lived to repent of his revenge ! On a copy of the satire, now in the possession of Mr. Murray, he afterwards wrote with his own hand the following sentence :—

"The greater part of this satire I most sincerely wish had never been written ; not only on account of the injustice of much of the critical and some of the personal part, but the tone and temper are such as I cannot approve.

"Diodati, Geneva, July 14th, 1816."

His satire, smart and successful as it was, afforded but slender promise of the wonders that followed it. The secret of his own strength was at that time probably unrevealed even to himself. It was amid influence of foreign scenery and manners that he first began to explore the depths of his genius. Mr. M. does not suffer him to depart on his wanderings without some fifteen pages of exceedingly diffuse and whimsical meditation. He gives us much grave speculation on the disappointed loves of the schoolboy—(a disaster probably experienced by some nine schoolboys out of ten)—and much profound research respecting the revolution which was now taking place in the character of his hero. All this is treated with nearly as much solemn prolixity as if the progress of a national revolution, or the vicissitudes of a great empire, were the subject of investigation. The case of Lord Byron (if we

are to trust his biographer) is precisely exhibited by Shakspeare's fancy, of "sweet bells jangled out of tune." His early disadvantages and mortifications had turned the original harmonies of his character into discord; his very virtues and excellencies ministered to the violence of the change. The ardour that burned through his friendships and loves, now fed the fierce explosions of his indignation and scorn; and—and—a great deal more to the same purpose. In all this we are able to discern little but the workings of intense egotism and undisciplined passion; and we suspect that many others will be tempted to the same view of the matter when they see the result of all this furious fermentation, exhibited to us as it is by Mr. Moore himself, when he tells us, that the "martyr of genius" was hurried at last, "*by his hatred of hypocrisy*, and his horror of all pretensions to virtue, into the still more dangerous boast and ostentation of vice." It is, in the first place, but a poor symptom of true vigour and elevation of mind, when a man fancies (as Lord Byron seems to have fancied) that the world is in a sort of conspiracy against him: and, as for *hatred of hypocrisy*, why, truly, the phrase is a phrase "of exceeding good command;" eminently serviceable and full of excellent "accommodation," whenever we get weary of the restraints of virtue. We have then only to look upon those who maintain a form of righteousness and godliness, while they deny the power thereof: and what shall we do to avoid the guilt of that odious masquerade? What, but cast away both the form and the power together? We shall then be no hypocrites, but brave and gallant spirits, superior to vile artifice and contemptible dissimulation. And who can grudge that such spirits should obey the noble energies inherent in their very composition?

"Thou, Nature, art their Goddess! to thy law
 Their services are bound! wherefore should they
 Stand in the plague of custom?"

It is needless to dwell on the peregrination of the bard. The pilgrimage of Childe Harold is known to all the world. It gives Mr. Moore, however, another opportunity for some very fine writing, of which the following is a specimen :—

“ Having traversed Acarnania, the travellers passed to the Ætolian side of the Achelous, and on the 21st of November reached Missolonghi. And here,—it is impossible not to pause, and send a mournful thought forward to the visit which, fifteen years after, he paid to this same spot,—when, in the full meridian both of his age and fame, he came to lay down his life as the champion of that land, through which he now wandered a stripling and a stranger. Could some Spirit have here revealed to him the events of that interval,—have shown him, on the one side, the triumphs that awaited him, the power his varied genius would acquire over all hearts, alike to elevate or depress, to darken or illuminate them,—and then place, on the other side, all the penalties of this gift, the waste and wear of the heart through the imagination, the havoc of that perpetual fire within, which, while it dazzles others, consumes the possessor,—the invidiousness of such an elevation in the eyes of mankind, and the revenge they take on him who compels them to look up to it,—*would* he, it may be asked, have welcomed glory on such conditions? Would he not rather have felt that the purchase was too costly, and that such warfare with an *ungrateful* world, while living, would be ill recompensed, even by the immortality it might award him afterwards.”—Vol. i. pp. 211, 212.

We confess that there is a good deal more in all this than has ever been dreamed of in our narrow and antiquated philosophy. For instance, we doubt whether we correctly apprehend what can be meant by “ the waste and wear of the heart through the imagination, and the havoc of the perpetual fire within, which, while it dazzles others, consumes the possessor.” We are apt to surmise that this is an audaciously dithyrambic version of the plain fact—stated by the biographer himself elsewhere—that “ all that was bad and irregular in the nature of this individual burst forth together with all that was most energetic and grand.” If his imagination had power to waste his heart, it probably was because it was lighted up

by the "*strange fire*" of unhallowed passions. The flame of genius seldom destroys or injures the shrine in which it burns, unless it be nourished by some ingredients of most deadly and corrosive quality. Minds of the very highest order experience but little of this internal *havoc*. Whenever tempestuous desires are united with mighty powers of conception, we may indeed reasonably expect volcanic heavings, and "lava floods," and all those terrible phenomena which minister so amply to the eloquence of Mr. Moore. But we do not believe that the most fervid poetical temperament is ever fatally adverse to the peace of its possessor, unless combined with elements of a pernicious and explosive nature. What did Shakspeare or Milton know of the devastation of those hidden fires which, we are required to believe, converted their late countryman into a perpetual holocaust, and sent up a lurid flame which consumed the poet himself, while it shed a disastrous splendour on the world? We, for our parts, are obstinate in our persuasion, that in the present instance the waste of heart is easily accounted for. When this man was admitted, if we may so speak, to the apocalypse of his own intellectual domain, the sight raised within him no thought of gratitude to the giver; and the blessing was then, as might be expected, turned almost into a burning curse. He discovered the secret of his capacities, but he did not discover the use to which they should be consecrated. We heartily wish that the present generation would learn what that use is, from one whose title to instruct them can never be questioned, even by the most insane and superstitious of Lord Byron's fire-worshippers.

"These abilities," says Milton, "are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed; and are of power to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility—to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in a right tune—to celebrate, in glorious and lofty hymns, the throne and

equipage of God's Almightyness, and what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought, with high providence, in his Church—to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ—to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime—in virtue amiable or grave—whatsoever hath passion and admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune, from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within—all these things, with a solid and treatable smoothness, to paint out and describe; teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue, through all the instances of example, with such delight—(to those, especially, of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed,)—that, whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they will then appear to all men easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed¹!”

Such are the oracles which came forth from the sanctuary of the heart of Milton. Is it possible that the age in which we live can be so villainously degenerate as to listen, with these words of sanctity ringing in their ears, to the periods of an effeminate and fantastic sophistry!

But the most prodigiously impudent and absurd sentence, in the paragraph above cited from Mr. Moore, is that in which he speaks of the warfare of the poet with an *ungrateful* world! We should be glad to learn what Lord Byron did for the world, for which he did not receive from the world the most ample and generous retribution? The world heaped admiration and renown upon him in full and prodigal measure; and if gold had been his object, the liberality of the world was sufficient to have raised him from indigence to affluence. It is true, that when he wantonly spurned at all that the best and wisest of mankind hold sacred, the voice of loud reprobation was lifted up against him; and the cry which

¹ Milton on Church Government, book ii

deepened at his heels may have raised within him a spirit of proud and almost ferocious defiance. But though he was, at last, villainously out of humour with the world, and in fiery wrath against his own country more especially, nothing (we are persuaded) ever entered his head so immensely ridiculous as to charge the world with *ingratitude*. This strain of "poor, unmanly, melancholy" whining, was reserved for his biographer; and if the defunct bard were to chastise the indiscretion of his friend, by *haunting* him a little, as he is said to have threatened to *haunt* his valet, old Fletcher, it would be a very proper punishment for coupling his name with so much wretched imbecility.

Lord Byron, having solemnly abandoned the vocation of authorship, and having repeatedly expressed his utter contempt for a life of scribbling, as compared with a life of action, returned to England, in an agony of impatience—to print! The success of his lampoon had persuaded him that satire was his *forte*; and he was languishing to be prosperously delivered of a poor paraphrase of Horace's Art of Poetry, which he had completed during his late travels. He was preserved by Apollo, in the shape of Mr. Dallas, who promised him immortality if he would but publish Childe Harold. For some time he stoutly resisted, being smitten with parental infatuation in favour of his satire, and with deep distrust of the merit of his stanzas. At length he consented to the anonymous appearance of the poem, and the effect was, (to use his own expression) that "*he awoke one fine morning and found himself famous.*" From that moment he was numbered among the grandest luminaries in the firmament of our modern literature—a wandering star of lurid and most disastrous brightness, whose appearance was—

"—— as a planetary plague, when Jove
Will o'er some high-iced city hang his poison
In the sick air."

The appearance of Childe Harold instantly threw open to him all the saloons of fashionable voluptuousness, and all the haunts of political liberalism. The brilliant world of dandyism and licentiousness was disclosed before him. He entered, of course, "nothing loath:" and, for a time,

" ————— he followed
The sugared game before him ;"

unchilled, indeed, by the "icy precepts of respect," but not without frequent disturbance from fits of insufferable weariness and disgust. By these he was driven occasionally back into the solitude which he naturally loved, and from which he continued to fling, with careless profusion, a succession of splendours which kept the world perpetually on the gaze. The period of his familiarity with the Paradise of Folly, into which his fame had introduced him, was an important one in his history. It was in this limbo of "vain and transitory things," that he seems chiefly to have wrought himself into that bitter contempt for his species, that scornful and incurable disbelief of the reality of virtue, which was at length engrained into his whole constitution, and became, as it were, "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." It is melancholy to think, that the mysteries of fashionable and patrician life should have made him an accomplished adept in the vile freemasonry of this heartless scepticism. In the world of dukes, and duchesses, and exquisites, and exclusives, and senators, and statesmen, it was, that he contrived to collect the materials of his eternal libels on human nature, and to prepare his genius for tricks of audacity and desperation which finally made him "an astonishment," and almost "a curse." One thing, however, is truly remarkable ; that although he steeped himself to the very lips in the dissoluteness of the circle around him, he never appears to have deeply imbibed the spirit of its elegance and refinement. He never lost the

"twang of the borrachio," which he contracted in his earlier years. It was said of Socrates that he resembled the Sileni,—certain grotesque figures, which, on being opened, were found to inclose images of the Gods. Alas! we fear the case was grievously reversed in the instance before us. The exterior was, in an eminent degree, courtly and engaging; but there was a grinning satyr within; a lurking goblin of impurity and grossness; a low, fleshly, ruffian sort of incubus, that sat mocking at the show of refinement and dignity without. In plain round terms, his whole history affords us too much reason to believe, that, with him, the impress of gentleman never descended very deeply below the surface. With all his bitter contempt for vulgarity,—that is, for the affectation of *shabby-genteelness*,—there is little doubt that he had, at bottom, a sneaking kindness, if not an inveterate passion, for coarseness and *blackguardism*, respecting which he observes, in one of his letters¹, that "it comprehends wit, humour, and strong sense, at times." And hence it is that, with so much haughtiness and fastidiousness, there never was, perhaps, a character with so little of genuine dignity and delicacy.

We pause here a moment to notice an event to which Mr. Moore attaches great importance, if we are to judge by the unmerciful length at which he has been pleased to relate it. "Can none remember?—yes, we know all must,"—the tremendous critico-martial encounter at Chalk Farm, hitched into rhyme by the provoking pleasantry of the Noble Satirist. Relative to this matter, some correspondence, of rather a polemical cast, ensued; and the whole of it is here printed, for the purpose of honouring the good sense, self-possession, and manly frankness of Lord Byron. We do not profess to be judges of such affairs: but, in our simple apprehension, the

¹ Vol. ii. p. 478.

matter might have been settled in two words. Instead of this, a circuitous and wary correspondence takes place, conducted according to the most approved forms of the world's conventional diplomacy. Fortunately, the event was bloodless. The heroes approached, each through an admirable series of parallels. "Their hearts were mighty, their skins were whole, and burnt sack,"—or, at least, abundance of good companionship,—“was the issue.” The high contracting parties exchanged assurances of their most distinguished consideration. From that time Lord Byron and Tom Moore were sworn brothers; and an intimacy was struck up, which has eventually invested the latter with the office which is now his delight, his glory, and—we may reasonably presume—his gain.

In one of Lord Byron's letters to another correspondent, this year, we have a magnificent specimen of his qualifications for judging on questions connected with religion or the Scriptures.

"I have gotten," he says, "a book by Sir W. Drummond, entitled *Œdipus Judaicus*, in which he endeavours to prove the greater part of the Old Testament an allegory, particularly Genesis and Joshua. He professes himself a theist, and handles the literal interpretation very roughly. I wish you could see it. Mr. W. has lent it to me; and I confess, to me, it is worth fifty *Watsons*!"

Of course, it was worth fifty *Watsons* to him, or to any man who, like him, loved darkness better than light. It was better, not only than fifty *Watsons*, but better than the whole army of mighty intellects who have done valiantly in behalf of the truth; better than the Halls, and the Taylors, and the Barrows, and the Bacons, and the whole host of them put together. The performance of Sir William Drummond, it is well known, was scarcely outdone in extravagance by the wildest absurdities of the Rabbinical writers; and it soon fell into contempt and oblivion. But it was a lar . . . establish freedom

of thought, and therefore it threw into the shade the prodigies of erudition, and of eloquence, and of reasoning, which had been lavished for ages in the cause of *superstition*! This incredible sally of impudence and folly, be it remembered, is addressed to a gentleman designed for *holy orders*; and it finds its place in a publication put forth by an intimate of the Noble Genius, with the express purpose of disabusing the public mind of its prepossessions to his disadvantage. All this irresistibly reminds us of the text, "Let the dead bury their dead," and not only bury them, but pronounce their funeral oration, and embalm their memory, and hand down their excellence to the imitation of a grateful posterity; yea, let them do this, after that very fashion, of which a noble specimen is to be found some pages onward.

"The world," says the biographer, "had yet to witness what he was capable of when emancipated from this restraint"—(the *prejudices* of society). "For, graceful and powerful as were his flights, while society had still a hold of him, it was not till let loose from the leash that he rose into the true region of his strength"—(the region peopled with Cain, Don Juan, &c.); "and though, almost in proportion to that strength was, too frequently, the abuse of it, yet so magnificent are the very excesses of such energy, that it is impossible, even while we condemn, not to admire."—Vol. i. p. 351.

Why, aye,

" ————— e'en let the Devil
Be, some time, honoured for his burning throne."

For the control imposed upon him by the "meddling world" during his confinement within *its rules*, he partially and imperfectly indemnified himself by pouring out the secrets of his spirit in his Journal, which was to him as a confidential and familiar friend, and afforded him vast relief when his soul was labouring with the *magnanimities* of impiety. And this is the fashion in

which, as appears from his *log-book*, (as he terms it,) he communeth with his own heart :—

“ All are inclined to believe what they covet, from a lottery-ticket up to a passport to Paradise,—in which, from description, I see nothing very tempting. My restlessness tells me I have something within that ‘passeth show.’ It is for Him, who made it, to prolong that spark of celestial fire which illuminates, yet burns, this frail tenement; but I see no such horror in a ‘dreamless sleep,’ and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not render tiresome. How else ‘fell the angels,’ even according to your creed? They were immortal, heavenly, and happy as their *apostate Abdiel* is now by his treachery. Time must decide; and eternity won’t be the less agreeable or more horrible because one did not expect it. In the meantime, I am grateful for some good, and tolerably patient under certain evils—*grace à Dieu et mon bon tempérament.*”—Vol. i. p. 455.

Again :—

“ To-day responded to La Baronne de Staël Holstein, and sent to Leigh Hunt (an acquisition to my acquaintance—through Moore—of last summer) a copy of the two Turkish Tales. Hunt is an extraordinary character, and not exactly of the present age. He reminds me more of the Pym and Hampden times—much talent, great independence of spirit, and an austere, yet not repulsive, aspect. If he goes on *qualis ab incepto*, I know few men who will deserve more praise or obtain it. I must go and see him again;—the rapid succession of adventure since last summer, added to some serious uneasiness and business, have interrupted our acquaintance; but he is a man worth knowing; and though, for his own sake, I wish him out of prison, I like to study character in such situations. He has been unshaken, and will continue so. I don’t think him deeply versed in life;—he is the bigot of virtue (not religion), and enamoured of the beauty of that ‘empty name,’ as the last breath of Brutus pronounced, and every day proves it. He is, perhaps, a little opinionated, as all men who are the *centre of circles*, wide or narrow—the Sir Oracles, in whose name two or three are gathered together—must be, and as even Johnson was; but, withal, a valuable man, and less vain than success and even the consciousness of preferring ‘the right to the expedient’ might excuse.”—*Ibid.* p. 58.

The exquisitely ludicrous comparison of Leigh Hunt to the men of the grand Rebellion almost indemnifies one for the worthless and puerile cant about “*virtue, that*

empty name," and so forth. Shades of Pym and Hampden, look from your present abodes, and contemplate your antitype in the sage and poet of Cocaigne!

Let us take another specimen of these comfortable and high-minded soliloquies :

" I wonder how the deuce any body could make such a world ; for what purpose dandies, for instance, were ordained—and kings—and fellows of colleges—and women of ' a certain age'—and many men of any age—and myself, most of all !

' Divesne prisco et natus ab Inacho,
Nil interest, an pauper, et infimâ
De gente, sub dio moreris,
Victima nil miserantis Orci.

• • •
Omnes eodem cogimur.'

" Is there any thing beyond?—*who* knows? *He* that can't tell. Who tells that there *is*? He who don't know. And when shall he know? Perhaps, when he don't expect, and generally, when he don't wish it. In this last respect, however, are all not alike : it depends a good deal upon education,—something upon nerves and habits—but most upon digestion."—Vol. i. p. 500.

Much in the same spirit of almost fiendish mockery is a good deal of his *communing* with his friend and biographer, whom he appears to have used quite as unceremoniously and confidentially as he did his Journal : for instance—

" I have also, more or less, been breaking a few of the favourite commandments; but I mean to pull up and marry,—if any one will have me. In the mean time, the other day, I nearly killed myself with a collar of brawn, which I swallowed for supper, and indigested for I don't know how long. All this *gourmandise* was in honour of Lent; for I am forbidden meat all the rest of the year,—but it is strictly enjoined me during your solemn fast."—Vol. i. p. 540.

" My great comfort is, that the temporary celebrity I have wrung from the world has been in the very teeth of all opinions and prejudices. I have flattered no ruling powers; I have never concealed a single thought that tempted me. They can't say I have truckled to the times, nor to popular topics (as Johnson, or somebody, said of Cleveland), and whatever I have gained has been at the expenditure of as much *personal* favour as possible;

for I do believe never was a bard more unpopular, *quoad homines*, than myself. And now I have done;—‘*ludite nunc alios*.’ Every body may be d——d, as they seem fond of it, and resolved to stick lustily for endless brimstone.”—Vol. i. p. 541.

Here again be “excesses of energy which it is impossible, even while we condemn, not to admire!!!”

The log-book, however, has occasionally better things than these. For example, we find there the following very just *censura* of Lewis’s Monk.

“*Redde*”—(the poet was sometimes ambitious of spelling better than his neighbours)—“*Redde* a good deal, but desultorily. My head is crammed with the most useless lumber. It is odd that when I do read, I can only bear the chicken broth of—*any thing* but Novels. It is many a year since I looked into one (though they are sometimes ordered, by way of experiment, but never taken) till I looked yesterday at the worst parts of the Monk. These descriptions ought to have been written by Tiberius at Caprea—they are forced—the *philtred* ideas of a jaded voluptuary. It is to me inconceivable how they could have been composed by a man only twenty—his age when he wrote them. They have no nature—all the sour cream of cantharides. I should have suspected Buffon of writing them on the death-bed of his detestable dotage. I had never *redde* this edition, and merely looked at them from curiosity and recollection of the noise they made, and the name they have left to Lewis. But they could do no harm except

Here, we suppose, there follows something in the MS. quite unfit to be *redde* or uttered. It may be remarked here that these mysterious *lacunæ* are of very frequent occurrence, both in the extracts from the log-book and the correspondence. They are often found where the writer seems advancing towards the regions of blasphemy or obscenity; and, in such cases, our conductor generally brings us just to the “*fauces graveolentis Averni*,” but, very wisely and humanely, does not suffer us to step into the pestilential gulf.

The following passage is worth citing, as recording a curious fact, and containing a just observation.

“Allen (Lord Holland’s Allen—the best-informed and one

of the ablest men I know—a perfect Magliabecchi—a devourer, a Helluo of books, and an observer of men) has lent me a quantity of Burns's unpublished, and never-to-be published, Letters. They are full of oaths and obscene songs. What an antithetical mind!—tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling, dirt and deity—all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay!

“It seems strange; a true voluptuary will never abandon his mind to the grossness of reality. It is by exalting the earthly, the material, the *physique* of our pleasures, by veiling these ideas, by forgetting them altogether, or, at least, never naming them hardly to one's self, that we alone can prevent them from disgusting.”—Vol. i. p. 469.

This remark shows how deeply, even at that early age, Byron had studied the *philosophy* of vice. The above fragment contains the best explanation that, perhaps, can be given of the anomalous and monstrous union, which sometimes we see exemplified, of gross sensuality with the highest powers of intellect. It is impossible to peruse it without recollecting the admirable and almost prophetic felicity, with which the same sentiment has been expanded by the author of the Night Thoughts:—

“The fact notorious, nor obscure the cause,
We wear the chains of Pleasure and of Pride.
These share the man, and these distract him too.
Pride, like an eagle, builds among the stars;
But Pleasure, lark-like, nests upon the ground.
Joys shared by brute-creation, Pride resents,
Pleasure embraces. Man would both enjoy,
And both at once: a point how hard to gain!
But what can't Wit, when stung by strong desire?

Wit dares attempt this arduous enterprise.

Wit calls the Graces the chaste zone to loose,
Nor less than a plump god to fill the bowl.

Pleasure and Pride, by nature mortal foes,
At war eternal, which in man shall reign,
By Wit's address patch up a fatal peace,
And hand in hand, lead on the rank debauch,
From rank, refined to delicate and gay.
Art, cursed Art, wipes off the indebted blush

From Nature's cheek, and bronzes every shame.
 Man smiles in ruin, glories in his guilt,
 And Infamy stands candidate for praise!"—*Night v.*

One more dip into the log-book !

"Last night I supped with Lewis ; and, as usual, though I neither exceeded in solids or fluids, have been half dead ever since. My stomach is entirely destroyed by long abstinence; and *the rest* will probably follow. Let it : I only wish the *pair* over. The 'leap in the dark' is the least to be dreaded."—P. 460.

Such are the feelings with which a being—gifted with powers which must have continually spoken to him of immortality—could stand upon "this bank and shoal of time," and look upon the stupendous ocean of eternity that surrounds it ! And then—think of the self-denial which this scorner of human virtue could exercise, in order to avoid the horrors of obesity. He could *entirely destroy his stomach by abstinence* rather than endure the slightest loss of personal activity and grace. And yet he had always a sardonic sneer in readiness, to wither the *hypocrisy* which could cant and prose about counting all things as loss, compared with that hope which is the only anchor of the soul ! Of a truth, the martyrs of incredulity are but a feeble and unsteady folk, when brought to the stake of common sense. And fitly, indeed, are they rewarded, even *here*, for the base fidelity they show to their cause. If any one doubts this, let them learn it from our biographer.

"Finding Lord Byron," says Mr. Moore, "invariably lively when we were together, I often rallied him on the gloomy tone of his poetry, as assumed ; but his constant answer was—(and I soon ceased to doubt of its truth)—that, though thus merry and full of laughter with those he liked, he was at heart, one of the most melancholy wretches living."—Vol. i. p. 356.

The truth is, that he knew nothing of what Jeremy Taylor calls the "*perpetual festivities*" of a heart at peace

with itself. Hence the volcanic fires within, and the superficial bloom and verdure without. This contrast was afterwards very clearly discerned by one who was most interested in observing it, as will appear from a fragment of his own :—

“People have wondered at the melancholy which runs through my writings. Others have wondered at my personal gaiety. But I recollect once, after an hour in which I had been sincerely and particularly gay, and rather brilliant in company, my wife replying to me when I said (upon her remarking my high spirits), ‘And yet, Bell, I have been called and mis-called melancholy—you must have seen how falsely, frequently?’—‘No, Byron,’ she answered, ‘it is not so: at heart you are the most melancholy of mankind; and often when apparently gay—est.’”—*Moore*, vol. i. p. 649.

This is the blessedness of him who has, on one hand, a genius that can work miracles at his capricious bidding, and, on the other hand, passions that laugh at all restraints, divine and human! These are the wages of the adventurer who takes service with those noted and inseparable brethren, Sans-loy, Sans-foy, and Sans-joy!

It was thought by several of Lord Byron's friends that matrimony afforded him the only chance of deliverance from this vile society. He seems to have thought so himself; for he says, somewhere in his *log-book*—“a wife would be the salvation of me.” It was hoped, at least, that marriage might do for him what a *legitimate* despotism sometimes does for a nation harassed and torn to pieces by a rapid succession of revolutionary tyrannies. That he thought the experiment, at all events, worth trying, is evident from the fact, that he had once already offered his neck to the yoke of wedlock. He had, actually been a suitor to Miss Milbanke, the present Lady Byron. But his hour was not yet come. The lady, with every imaginable assurance of friendship and regard, had declined the proposal. She had, however, accompanied her refusal with the expression of a wish that their

correspondence should be continued—alas! *periculose plenum opus aleæ!* For, as his lordship shrewdly observed, *friendship*, with young ladies, is but love full-fledged, and only waiting for a fine day to fly. This intercourse of *friendship* was kept up for about two years; during which period the sentiment had been gaining strength of pinion for its adventurous and most disastrous flight. At last, the critical moment arrived, and in Sept. 1814 the lady was addressed with a renewed offer of allegiance. The circumstances which led to this step shall be described by Mr. Moore.

“A person, who had for some time stood high in his affection and confidence, observing how cheerless and unsettled was the state both of his mind and prospects, advised him strenuously to marry; and, after much discussion, he consented. The next point for consideration was—who was to be the object of his choice: and while his friend mentioned one lady, he himself named Miss Milbanke. To this, however, his adviser strongly objected,—remarking to him, that Miss Milbanke had at present no fortune, and that his embarrassed affairs would not allow him to marry without one; that she was moreover a learned lady, which would not at all suit him. In consequence of these representations, he agreed that his friend should write a proposal for him to the other lady named, which was accordingly done; and an answer, containing a refusal, arrived as they were, one morning, sitting together. ‘You see,’ said Lord Byron, ‘that, after all, Miss Milbanke is to be the person;—I will write to her.’ He accordingly wrote on the moment, and as soon as he had finished, his friend, remonstrating still strongly against his choice, took up the letter,—but on reading it over, observed, ‘Well really, this is a very pretty letter;—it is a pity it should not go. I never read a prettier one’ ‘Then it *shall* go,’ said Lord Byron, and in so saying, sealed, and sent off, on the instant, this fiat of his fate.”—*Moore*, pp. 580, 581.

Now is not this, we would ask, a right merry-conceited and most delectable scene? What might not be made of it, in the hands of an artist of any dramatic powers? A young gentleman wants to be married. His guide, philosopher, and friend, for the time being, violently

remonstrates against his choice, because the lady has plenty of learning in possession, but fortune only in expectancy. The lover, however, sits down and writes; his sage and faithful counsellor, retaining all his objections to the person addressed, nevertheless gives his sanction and approbation to the dispatch; and Miss Milbanke is invited to become Lady Byron because—it is a pity that a *pretty letter* should not go!—Could the genius of urbane comedy have suggested a happier incident? How shall the laughter-loving portion of the most discerning public in the world express their obligations to the candour and impartiality which has furnished them with it;—and this, too, in magnanimous disregard of certain *tragic* reminiscences, which the scene must inevitably call up in the minds of some surviving individuals? For ourselves, if we could imagine any thing to heighten the comic interest of the *situation*, it would be to have placed the lady behind a skreen, where she might have witnessed the extremely pleasant consultation which was to dispose of her future destinies; and then, to exhibit the enviable feelings of the noble adventurer, on being consigned—(as, in that case, he most undoubtedly would have been consigned)—for the second time, to the long list of rejected aspirants! The affair, however, was ordained to have a different termination.

“On the day of the arrival of the lady’s answer, he was sitting at dinner, when his gardener came in and presented him with his mother’s wedding ring, which she had lost many years before, and which the gardener had just found in digging up the mould under her window. Almost at the same moment, the letter from Miss Milbanke arrived, and Lord Byron exclaimed, ‘If it contains a consent, I will be married with this very ring.’ It *did* contain a very flattering acceptance of his proposal, and a duplicate of the letter had been sent to London, in case this should have missed him.”—*Memoranda, Moore*, vol. i. p. 582, note.

The following is one of the various letters in which he

announces his success. It would be amusing and laughable enough, if one could but dismiss all recollection of the sequel.

"TO THE COUNTESS OF ———"

Albany, October 5th, 1814.

"DEAR LADY ———,

"Your recollection and invitation do me great honour; but I am going to be 'married, and can't come.' My intended is two hundred miles off, and the moment my business here is arranged, I must set out in a great hurry to be happy. Miss Milbanke is the good-natured person who has undertaken me, and, of course, I am very much in love, and as silly as all single gentlemen must be in that sentimental situation. I have been accepted these three weeks; but when the event will take place, I don't exactly know. It depends partly upon lawyers, who are never in a hurry. One can be sure of nothing; but, at present, there appears no other interruption to this intention, which seems as mutual as possible, and now no secret, though I did not tell first,—and all our relatives are congratulating away to right and left in the most fatiguing manner.


"You perhaps know the lady. She is niece to Lady Melbourne, and cousin to Lady Cowper and others of your acquaintance, and has no fault, except being a great deal too good for me, and that I must pardon, if nobody else should. It might have been *two* years ago, and, if it had, would have saved me a world of trouble. She has employed the interval in refusing about half a dozen of my particular friends, (as she did me once, by the way,) and has taken me at last, for which I am very much obliged to her. I wish it was well over, for I do hate bustle, and there is no marrying without some;—and then, I must not marry in a black coat, they tell me, and I can't bear a blue one.

"Pray forgive me for scribbling all this nonsense. You know I must be serious all the rest of my life, and this is a parting piece of buffoonery, which I write with tears in my eyes, expecting to be agitated. Believe me most seriously and sincerely your obliged servant,

"BYRON.

"P. S. My best rems. to Lord * * on his return."—*Moore*, vol. i. pp. 583, 584.

Byron was now a doomed man: and his friend and biographer,—who had long entertained such sanguine hopes of the transforming efficacy of wedlock,—began to look forward with dismay to the consequences of the irrevocable step, very soon after the poet had resolved upon it. He was assailed, he tells us, with certain doubts and misgivings as to the fitness of the gifted man for the matrimonial tie, under any circumstances whatever; and, was filled with a foreboding anxiety as to his fate, which the unfortunate events that followed but too fully justified. And the discovery of Childe Harold's disqualification for "the calm affections and comforts which form the cement of domestic life" seems to have led to a still wider range of speculation; the result of which is, that "men of the higher order of genius" have, in all ages and in all countries, been found to labour under a similar sort of inaptitude. The most illustrious sages, we are reminded, have all lived single lives; married poets have seldom been happy in their homes; and, to the most conspicuous instances of this infelicity—Dante, Milton, Shakspeare, and Dryden, "we have now to add, as a partner in their destiny, a name worthy of being placed beside the greatest of them—Lord Byron." What may be the authority for numbering Shakspeare among the *victims* of matrimony, we are unable to divine. But however that may be, Shakspeare and his mighty brethren together, supply Mr. Moore with materials for no less than eight quarto pages of most mellifluous and solemn disquisition; the moral of all which is, that intellectual mediocrity is one of the indispensable ingredients of conjugal bliss! Surely, it is a pity that these profound meditations did not occur to him, for the benefit of his noble friend, before he joined in urging him to a matrimonial adventure, and in representing such a measure as affording the best hope of reclaiming him from



those eccentricities which are incident to the planetary path of every distinguished genius! As it is, the speculations of the biographer are not a little curious. At first, he is persuaded that domestic peace is the pole star which is to regulate the course of this mighty intellect. But no sooner does he find that this hope is treacherous, than he resolves that his hero shall, at least, be ruined in good company. He accordingly ransacks all literary history; and his researches are rewarded with the seasonable and consoling discovery, that many a renowned adventurer has made shipwreck of peace and happiness in the same perilous navigation?

With these illustrious authorities for the domestic infelicity of genius, we are duly fortified and prepared for the issue of the adventure in question.

"Accordingly, at the end of December, accompanied by his friend, Mr. Hobhouse, he (Lord Byron) set out for Seaham, the seat of Sir Ralph Milbanke, the lady's father, in the county of Durham, and on the 2d of January, 1815, was married."

The poetical history of this event is as follows:—

———"I saw him stand
Before an altar with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The Starlight of his Boyhood;—as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The self-same aspect, and the quivering shock
That in the antique Oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude; and then—
As in that hour—a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced,—and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reel'd around him; he could see
Not that which was, nor that which should have been—
But the old mansion and the accustom'd hall,
And the remember'd chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,

And her, who was his destiny, came back,
And thrust themselves between him and the light :—
What business had they there at such a time ¹ ?”

Moore, vol. i. p. 599.

The above visionary representation of the matter is here “introduced historically,” as closely agreeing with the *prose* account of the same affair in the Memoranda of the bridegroom, in which he describes himself—

“as waking, on the morning of his marriage, with the most melancholy reflections, on seeing his wedding-suit spread out before him. In the same mood he wandered about the grounds alone, till he was summoned for the ceremony, and joined, for the first time on that day, his bride and her family. He knelt down—he repeated the words after the clergyman; but a mist was before his eyes—his thoughts were elsewhere; and he was awakened by the congratulations of the by-standers, and found that he was—married!”

About a month after this most joyous enterprise, we find him writing thus from Seaham.

“Since I wrote last I have been transferred to my father-in-law’s, with my lady, and my lady’s maid, &c. &c.; and the *treacle-moon* is over, and *I am awake, and find myself married*. My spouse and I agree to—and in—admiration. Swift says, ‘no wise man ever married;’ but, for a fool, I think it the most *atabrosial* of all possible future states.

“I wish you would respond, for I am here *oblitusque meorum, obliviscendus et illis*. Pray tell me what is going on in the way of *intriguery*, and how the w——s and rogues of the upper Beggar’s Opera go on—or rather go off—in or after marriage; or who are going to break any particular commandment. Upon this dreary coast we have nothing but county meetings and shipwrecks; and I have this day dined upon fish, which, probably, had dined upon the crews of several colliers lost in the late gales. But I saw the sea once more in all the glories of surf and foam—almost equal to the Bay of Biscay, and the interesting white squall and short seas of Archipelago memory.

“My papa, Sir Ralpho, hath recently made a speech at a Durham tax-meeting; and not only at Durham, but *here*, several times since, after dinner. He is now, I believe, speaking

¹ The Dream.

it to himself (I left him in the middle) over various decanters, which can neither interrupt him, nor fall asleep, as might probably have been the case with some of his audience."—"I must go to tea: d— tea! I wish it was Kinnaird's brandy, and with you to lecture me about it."

Now here we must pause, for one moment, to contemplate the glorious liberty wherewith the sons of genius are made free from the yoke which hangs about the neck of quotidian and prosaic respectability! Of the dissolute levity of this epistle we say nothing; but here is a man, received with confidence and hospitality by the father of the woman, whose feelings he is bound by every tie to spare and to respect; and yet, within *a little month*, he is found making himself merry, with his familiar friend, at the expense of his unsuspecting host. But this, it may be said, is nothing more than a transient sally of humour or of spleen, bursting out in the unrestrained flow of confidential and private correspondence. Well—on this point we are all liberality and acquiescence! Be it even so. But what, then, shall we say of the violation of this privacy and confidence? What shall we say of this exposure, which, while the widow is still surviving, holds up the deceased parent to public derision? We do not ask the world to abide by the sentence of ancient and censorious dotards like ourselves; but we appeal to every man, every woman, and every child, brought up with the commonest feelings of delicacy and kindness, whether they can contemplate this disclosure without indignation? Can any thing be well more unmanly, more heartless, more ungenerous?

It will be some relief to introduce here, from the "Detached Thoughts" of Lord Byron, certain very diverting recollections of his acquaintance with the interior of a theatre—a dangerous episode in the life of a married man.

"When I belonged to the Drury Lane Committee, and was

one of the Sub-Committee of Management, the number of plays upon the shelves were about *five* hundred. Conceiving that amongst these there must be *some* of merit, in person and by proxy I caused an investigation. I do not think that of those which I saw there was one which could be conscientiously tolerated. There never were such things as most of them! Mathurin was very kindly recommended to me by Walter Scott, to whom I had recourse, firstly, in the hope that he would do something for us himself, and secondly, in my despair, that he would point out to us any young (or old) writer of promise. Mathurin sent his Bertram and a letter *without* his address, so that at first I could give him no answer. When I at last hit upon his residence, I sent him a favourable answer and something more substantial. His play succeeded, but I was at that time absent from England.

"I tried Coleridge too, but he had nothing feasible in hand at the time. Mr. Sotheby obligingly offered *all* his tragedies, and I pledged myself, and notwithstanding many squabbles with my Committed Brethren, did get 'Ivan' accepted, read, and the parts distributed. But, lo! in the very heart of the matter, upon some *tepidness* on the part of Kean, or warmth on that of the author, Sotheby withdrew his play. Sir J. B. Burgess did also present four tragedies and a farce, and I moved Green-room and Sub-Committee, but they would not.

"Then the scenes I had to go through!—the authors, and the authoresses, and the milliners, and the wild Irishmen—the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee—who came in upon me! to all of whom it was proper to give a civil answer, and a hearing, and a reading. Mrs. * * 's father, an Irish dancing-master of sixty years, called upon me to request to play Archer, dressed in silk stockings, on a frosty morning, to show his legs (which were certainly good and Irish for his age, and had been still better)—Miss Emma Somebody, with a play entitled 'The Bandit of Bohemia,' or some such title or production—Mr. O'Higgins, then resident at Richmond, with an Irish tragedy, in which the unities could not fail to be observed, for the protagonist was chained by the leg to a pillar during the chief part of the performance. He was a wild man, of a savage appearance, and the difficulty of *not* laughing at him was only to be got over by reflecting upon the probable consequences of such cachinnation.

"As I am really a civil and polite person, and *do* hate giving pain when it can be avoided, I sent them up to Douglas Kin-naird—who is a man of business, and sufficiently ready with a negative—and left them to settle with him; and as the begin-

ning of next year I went abroad, I have since been little aware of the progress of the theatres.

* * * *

"Players are said to be an impracticable people. They are so; but I managed to steer clear of any disputes with them, and excepting one debate with the elder Byrne about Miss Smith's *pas de*—(something—I forget the technicals), I do not remember any litigation of my own. I used to protect Miss Smith because she was like Lady Jane Harley in the face, and likenesses go a great way with me. Indeed, in general, I left such things to my more bustling colleagues, who used to reprove me seriously for not being able to take such things in hand without buffooning with the histrions, or throwing things into confusion, by treating light matters with levity.

* * * *

"Then the Committee!—then the Sub-Committee!—we were but few, but never agreed. There was Peter Moore, who contradicted Kinnaird; and Kinnaird, who contradicted every body: then our two managers, Rae and Dibdin; and our secretary, Ward! and yet we were all very zealous and in earnest to do good and so forth. * * * furnished us with prologues to our revived old English plays, but was not pleased with me for complimenting him as 'the *Upton*' of our theatre, (Mr. Upton is, or was, the poet who writes the songs for Astley's,) and almost gave up prologuing in consequence."—*Moore*, vol. i. pp. 631—633.

We have neither the right nor the wish to dwell in any detail upon the disastrous issue of Lord Byron's matrimonial experiment. The solution of the whole affair probably is, that his lady, after living a twelvemonth with him, became strongly impressed with the belief that he was scarcely in a state of mental sanity; and that, under the influence of this persuasion, she conceived herself justified in consulting her own peace and safety; and that she accordingly effected her retreat from him by what, when unexplained, might have the appearance of a sort of stratagem. There probably was enough in his demeanour to produce an impression that his mind had lost its equilibrium. He confesses, himself, that the confusion of his affairs, and the consequent disorder of his health and distraction of his mind, frequently drove him into

excess, and disqualified his temper for comfort; and he further allows, that something is to be attributed to his strange and desultory habits, brought on by his early release from discipline and restraint. One eruption of his "perturbed spirit" is mentioned by Mr. Moore as having powerfully aided the suspicion that his faculties were in a state of dislocation. In a fit of vexation and rage, brought on by some of those humiliating embarrassments to which he was almost daily exposed, he took a favourite old watch, which had been his companion from boyhood, and had gone with him to Greece, furiously dashed it on the hearth, and ground it to pieces among the ashes with the poker! In this paroxysm of almost frantic violence might be discerned a strong symptom of alarming and habitual excitement; and it may easily be imagined that a few more explosions, at all resembling this, might render his society absolutely intolerable to a woman of refined notions and habits, unless she happened to be gifted with nerves of steel. Her own representation of this matter is now before the public, and is printed by Mr. Moore in the Appendix. The upshot of it may be stated in two words. Either Lord Byron was mad, or he was not. If he was mad, he could not be a very comfortable sort of person to live with. If he was not mad—and if Lady Byron was to consider his past conduct as that of a person in his sound mind—nothing (she avows) could induce her to return to him, and place herself once more in his power. What the particulars of that conduct were, she has thought it proper to abstain from describing. She has declined, as she had a most unquestionable right to decline, the obtrusive and impertinent cross-examinations, which have been administered to her through the press, relative to the merits of the case between herself and her husband. She has confined herself chiefly to the solemn assertion, that, whoever may have been to blame in the affair, her own parents stand entirely clear of imputation;

and she has been prompted to break silence at all, solely by her desire to vindicate their memory from insult. With regard to the causes of the separation, she has contented herself with printing the following letter from her professional friend and adviser, Dr. Lushington :—

“ MY DEAR LADY BYRON,

“ I can rely upon the accuracy of my memory for the following statement. I was originally consulted by Lady Noel on your behalf, whilst you were in the country ; the circumstances detailed by her were such as justified a separation, but they were not of that aggravated description as to render such a measure indispensable. On Lady Noel's representation, I deemed a reconciliation with Lord Byron practicable, and felt most sincerely a wish to aid in effecting it. There was not on Lady Noel's part any exaggeration of the facts ; nor so far as I could perceive, any determination to prevent a return to Lord Byron : certainly none was expressed when I spoke of a reconciliation. When you came to town in about a fortnight, or perhaps more, after my first interview with Lady Noel, I was for the first time informed by you of facts utterly unknown, as I have no doubt, to Sir Ralph and Lady Noel. *On receiving this additional information, my opinion was entirely changed : I considered a reconciliation impossible. I declared my opinion, and added, that if such an idea should be entertained, I could not, either professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.* Believe me, very faithfully yours,

“ STEPHEN LUSHINGTON.

“ Great George Street, Jan. 31, 1830.”—*Moore*, vol. ii. p. 816.

We will give no utterance to the various surmises which irresistibly rush into the mind on the perusal of this letter. Thus much, however, at least, is evident—that either Lady Byron was guilty of most flagitiously deceiving her legal advisers—which is absolutely incredible—or, that the friends of Lord Byron, if they have the slightest regard for his memory, must never stir this question more while they live !

For ourselves, forbearing all further inquiry into the causes of Lady Byron's separation from her husband, there is, nevertheless, one question which we are irre-

sistibly impelled to ask, though we fear it will be thought most detestably illiberal; namely, what right had any man, so deeply involved in pecuniary difficulties, to engage in matrimony at all? It appears, from Mr. Moore's own statement, that "on Byron's arrival in London, in December, 1814, he found his affairs in so utterly embarrassed a condition as to fill him with some alarm, and even to suggest to his mind the *prudence* of deferring his marriage." The *prudence* of deferring it! We should rather say, the imperative and irresistible duty of deferring it—unless, indeed, the lady, on a full and frank disclosure of circumstances, should generously choose to insist on an immediate completion of the engagement. But, in our judgment, the peculiar turpitude of the transaction lies much deeper than this. For our lives we cannot understand how a ruined man can dare to propose an alliance with any woman on earth, whether an heiress or not, without first telling her that he *is* a ruined man. Now it is evident from the tenor of the narrative before us, that at the very time of his offering himself to Miss Milbanke, Lord Byron must have distinctly known that this, or something very like this, was his own condition. He knew that his affairs had long been falling into a state of almost desperate confusion. We therefore ask, with all dutiful submission to more youthful and enlightened minds, how it was that he, or any honourable man, could endure the thought of committing the woman of his choice and attachment, even to the chance of all the misery and all the humiliation incident to such a state of things? And when, at last, he fully learned the ruinous extent of the evil, we should like to know the process by which he contrived to satisfy himself that he was not behaving almost like a scoundrel, in going to the altar without making known to the other parties the whole reality of his condition, and leaving to them the option

of a postponement or dissolution of the contract? The consequences of his rushing into new and heavy responsibilities, with all this load of debt about his neck, is formidably, but very justly, described by his devoted biographer. "His marriage (from the reputation, no doubt, of the lady being an heiress) was, at once, a signal for all the arrears and claims of a long accumulating state of embarrassment to explode upon him. His door was almost daily beset by duns, and his house nine times during that year in possession of bailiffs." And what other earthly result was to be expected? Is it credible that the "thriving wooer" himself can, at any moment of his wooing, have been wholly blind to the futurity which awaited his success? Can he have supposed it possible that the faintest rumour of his prosperity would fail to environ him with the *Αλαστορες* of Law and Justice, and (to use his own expression) "to shiver his household gods around him?" And yet, with these certainties before his eyes, he invites a virtuous, exemplary, and happy woman to share his destinies, and to stand exposed to "the slings and arrows of his own outrageous fortune!"

We care not one single rush whether the man who does this be an illustrious bard, or the most empty-headed walking gentleman, who burdens and afflicts with his leaden presence the routs and the club-houses of the metropolis. It is the vilest and stupidest of all despicable cant to tell us that grand and capacious faculties are to exempt a man from the dominion of those rules, the breach of which exposes all the ordinary sons of men to contempt and reprobation. If any obscure individual were to carry into the daily transactions of human life such principles as these, or rather, such utter disregard and oblivion of all principles, what would be his portion but ignominy and scorn? But the aristocracy of rank and of genius, it seems, are to pursue their glorious tra-

jectory far beyond the disturbing force of all vulgar moralities:—

“ Nam vos Trojugenæ vobis ignoscitis; et quæ
Turpia Cerdoni, Volesos Brutosquedecebun t!”

All the world knows the tempest which burst on the head of “the martyr” on his rupture with his wife. The winds of obloquy seemed to be let loose to fight against him from every corner of the heavens. In the first place there was the deep-mouthed indignation of wise and virtuous men. The cry, however, it may be allowed, was probably much aggravated by the yells of envious, malignant, and despairing mediocrity, and by the vile yelpings of low ill-nature, and reptile uncharitableness. But, however that may be, the clamour at last became utterly intolerable, and drove the illustrious delinquent from his *ungrateful* country, secretly exclaiming, perhaps, like Coriolanus to the Roman rabble,

“ Ye common cry of curs—I banish you!”

Mr. Moore has judged wisely in abstaining from any further allusion to these particulars. Time and justice, he conceives, are doing more in favour of Lord Byron’s character, than could be effected by any gossiping details. We should apprehend, that, of the two, Time is by far the better friend to his Lordship’s memory. “Who now asks,” says Mr. Moore, “whether Dante was right or wrong in his matrimonial differences? or by how many, whose fancies dwell fondly on his Beatrice, is even the name of his Gemma Donati remembered?” Why, then, should any friend of Lord Byron deny him the benefit of the same softening influence, which melts down the fiery colours and harsh lineaments of distant greatness? Why will they not leave his character to rest, and be content to let nothing but his genius fly abroad? Why will they persist in dragging him once more before the

bar of public inquisition, and provoking examination into his misdeeds, by pleadings like the following :—" During the lifetime of a man of genius, the world is but too much inclined to judge him rather by what he wants, than by what he possesses"—(as if any thing could supply the place of virtue !)—" and, even where conscious, as in the present case, that his defects are among the sources of his greatness, to require of him, unreasonably, the one without the other. If Pope had not been splenetic and irritable, we should have wanted his Satires ; and an impetuous temperament, and passions untamed, were indispensable to the *conformation* of a poet like Byron." Why, then, would to Heaven, we say, that his *conformation* had never taken place at all ! The curse of his example never can be redeemed by the splendour of his genius ; nay, the curse and the splendour, in this case, unhappily go together ; for the genius has here been too often employed to perpetuate the pestilence of the example. Really, if poetry cannot spring up in a soil that is not blasted by volcanic fires, and scorched by "*lava floods*;" if it languishes and dies under the sunshine of goodness and of piety ; if it cannot live and ripen under the milder influences which gladden our homes, and shed peace and comfort *about our path and about our bed* ; if this be so, it were devoutly to be wished that all Christian states, like Plato's republic, should be purged for ever of this pernicious growth. It were better that poets were banished from the land, if it be true that " the materials of order and of happiness" are not to be found in a bosom, from which genius is constantly pouring forth its rivers of flame ! But all this is not true. Poetry is not a Moloch, which demands the sacrifice of all that is dearest and most sacred to the human heart. Genius is not a gift for which a man must necessarily *exchange his own soul*. To talk thus, is to slander the highest endowment of our nature, and, in truth, but little less than to blas-

pHEME the Giver of them. It was, literally, no more necessary to the poetical triumphs and achievements of Byron that he should be an infidel, or a scoffer, or a libertine, or a bad husband, than it was that he should be an incendiary or a buccaneer. Vice, it is true, may, for wise and unsearchable reasons, be sometimes invested with the splendours of genius; but how does it follow from this, that vice and genius have any native elements in common with each other? Satan, we know, can assume the attributes of an angel of light; but how does this impeach the purity of those bright Intelligences, those Celestial Sanctities and Virtues, which surround the throne of Omnipotence!

We are accustomed to hear a great deal of the cant of hypocrisy, and the cant of bigotry, and prejudice; but we think it may very safely be averred, that the cant and the pedantry of liberalism are, to say the least, quite as intolerable. If, however, there must be canting, we do not see why the men of liberality should, on this occasion, have it all to themselves. We shall accordingly produce a sample of that commodity, which we hope will be found at least as palatable as that which has been, so elaborately, prepared for us by Thomas Moore.

“ Strong links and mutual sympathies connect
 The moral powers, and powers of intellect.
 Still these on those depend by union fine,
 Bloom as they bloom, and as they fade decline.
 Talents, 'tis true, gay, quick, and bright, has God
 To virtue oft denied, on vice bestow'd :
 Just as fond nature lovelier colours brings
 To paint the insect's than the eagle's wings.
 But, of our souls the high-born loftier part,
 Th' ethereal energies that touch the heart,
 Conceptions ardent, labouring thought intense,
 Creative Fancy's wild magnificence,
 And all the dread sublimities of song,
 These, Virtue, these to thee alone belong.
 These are celestial all; nor kindred hold
 With aught of sordid or debasing mould.

Chilled by the breath of Vice, their radiance dies,
And brightest burns when lighted at the skies.
Like vestal flames to purest bosoms given,
And kindled only by a ray from heaven¹."

And so much in answer to the raptures of Thomas Moore ;

" Nay, an he'll mouth, we'll rant as well as he ;"

and, as we trust, somewhat more to the purpose. For our own part, we fear not to avow that, in our judgment, the highest glories of *creative* fancy belong not to Childe Harold. The brightest heaven of *invention* he never climbed. Mr. Galt has said very truly, though in his odd and quaint manner, " No characteristic action distinguishes one of his heroes from another ; nor is there much dissimilarity in their sentiments. They have no individuality. They stalk and pass in mist and gloom ; grim, ghastly, portentous, mysterious shadows ; entities of the twilight ; weird things, like the sceptred effigies of the unborn issue of Banquo." All this sameness, and monotony, and indistinctness, is the consequence of his inability to penetrate into the various depths and recesses of human character ; and he who is unable to do this, has no title to the very first honours of genius. He may read and transcribe nature, as she has impressed herself on the face of the material creation ; or he may trace the lines and furrows which have been *ploughed* into the character by the force of the more impetuous and keen emotions ; but he has never been initiated into those *greater mysteries* which impart to the mightiest adepts, almost the stamp and aspect of divinity.

The second of Mr. Moore's ponderous volumes is devoted to that portion of Lord Byron's life which followed his separation from his wife. Its opening discovers this rejected husband " driven by the excommunicating voice of

¹ Mr. C. Grant.



society to an exile which had not even the dignity of appearing voluntary." He had often felt a sort of perverse gratification in representing himself as a being formed in a different mould from other men ; as having the elements so strangely mixed in him, that he " could neither love the world, nor the world love him." He now found, with rankling mortification, that the world was abundantly ready to take him at his word ; and he accordingly went forth from his country, bristling all over with fierce resentment ; resolved that, like a coiled hedgehog, he would present nothing but his prickles, to the nostrils and the jaws of his persecutors. In this comfortable mood it was, that he visited the plain of Waterloo, and climbed the " giant-snouted crags" of Switzerland : but he found that " the mountain-palaces of nature" could afford no asylum to a haunted heart¹ ; and during this period it was that the perilous stuff which weighed upon his bosom, vented itself in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, and the unearthly mystery of *Manfred*. For some time he lingered in the vicinity of Geneva, where he endured with wondrous tractability a good round scolding from " the Staël," on the desperate absurdity of attempting to stand at bay against the opinion of the world. This searching exhortation did so far " unbend his noble courage," that he actually signified to a friend in England his readiness still to be reconciled to his lady. The attempt failed. His words of peace were suffered to fall to the ground—(additional proof of her bitter sense of injury and outrage)—and they sprung up again, it would appear, in the shape of armed and vindictive feelings. From the moment of this repulse may, probably, be dated the commencement of a process, in the mind of the wanderer, more deep and rancorous than ever he had yet experienced. With the eruptions of that unholy fire, the world is already too

¹ Galt, p. 219.

well acquainted; and we conceive that, except among the veriest fanatics of his party, there cannot be a question respecting the atrocity of his vengeance. To us, it appears to bear the mark of the most cowardly brutality. He spared not to assail his lady and her family with every form of contemptuous derision and malignant insult. They were the perpetual subjects of his sarcasms and his rhymes; and this, too, even at a time when he was living on the property of the woman, whose peace and happiness had been wrecked by her connection with him. For, be it remembered, that though he formed to himself the resolution never to lay a finger on her fortune, this resolution he had not the integrity or fortitude to keep. He reserved for his own use one half the produce of the estates, which, in her right, he could legally command, after the death of Lady Noel. Is genius, we ask, to consecrate enormities like these? Is it to release a man from the obligation of acting, not merely with the honesty of an ordinary citizen, but with the spirit and dignity, and courtesy of a gentleman? Is it not treason to society, to speak of such things in any language, but that of the austerest reprobation?

The life of his Lordship at Venice is matter of general notoriety. Every one knows the ostentatious aversion which he there professed, for the society of his countrymen. For this feeling there might, perhaps, be some faint excuse. The sight,—nay, the very thought of an Englishman, was sure to environ him with painful and humiliating reminiscences, from which he might pardonably shrink. But then, there was something insufferably disgusting in the tone of insolence with which he avowed his “utter abhorrence of the travelling English,” and in the denunciations of their stupidity and coarseness, which are prodigally scattered over his correspondence. It is not, perhaps, quite so generally known, that in this “Sea-Sodom,”—as he himself entitles it,—he broke out

into a course of degrading profligacy which even he is said to have afterwards contemplated with loathing, if not remorse. If this, however, was imperfectly known before, Mr. Moore has taken most exemplary care that it shall be distinctly understood now. He has assumed some credit for the very laudable self-control wherewith he has abstained from all notice of the affairs of gallantry, which solaced the leisure of his Lordship, during "the witching time" of his early popularity in England. He is, however, extremely anxious that the world should duly estimate the value of this sacrifice: and he, accordingly, informs us, that he has been prompted to it solely by a delicate regard to living reputations, and to that "*peculiar sense of decorum in this country, which makes the mention of such frailties hardly a less crime than the commission of them.*" He does not, however, hesitate broadly to avow, that he *very deeply regrets the hard necessity which imposes this forbearance!* The disclosures in question, he conceives, are devoutly to be desired, inasmuch as they would help to illustrate "*the strange history of his Lordship's mind in one of its most interesting chapters!*" Fortunately, the world is not condemned to a total loss of the edification and delight, to be derived from the contemplation of his Lordship's softer moments. His life in Venice happily furnishes another *interesting chapter*, abounding in similar instruction, against the publication of which, Mr. Moore conceives, no injunction whatever can be reasonably apprehended. In foreign countries, it is comfortable to know, a different standard is applicable to the morality of females. What is wrong in England, is not *so very wrong* in Italy. They there, as Lord Byron himself informs us, leave the word *not* out of the seventh commandment; and, accordingly, with perfect "*gaiety of conscience,*" let heaven see the tricks which they dare not actually show their husbands. All this was exceedingly convenient to the hero; and it is

no less to his biographer, since it relieves him from all scruples towards the frail individuals involved in these little affairs; or, at all events, "whatever delicacy we may think it right to exercise in speaking of their frailties, must be with reference rather to our *views and usages* than theirs¹." Nothing in the world can be more clear and satisfactory! As the people of the Continent have a different and much more agreeable edition of the Decalogue than ourselves, it would be the extravagance of prudery for any Englishman to refuse himself the benefit of its various readings; or for any historian to abstain from presenting us with a distinct view of its inestimable and manifold advantages. Under these favourable circumstances, therefore, and "availing himself of the latitude thus allowed him," Mr. Moore has abandoned all his former reserve, and has given, "with but little suppression, the noble poet's letters relative to his Italian adventures. To throw a veil over the irregularities of his private life, would be to afford but a partial portraiture of his character—to rob him of the advantage of being himself the historian of his own errors—to deprive him of the softening light thrown round such transgressions by vivacity and fancy—by passionate love of beauty, and strong yearning after affection." To be sure, some little danger might, at first sight, be apprehended to the youthful imaginations of weak brethren or sisters, from the seduction of such an example; but these alarms will be found, on examination, to be quite unworthy of any liberal or enlightened understanding; especially when we look upon the barricadoes of tough gossamer and impenetrable muslin which have been raised by our cautious and exemplary moralist, between the virtue of his readers, and the perilous influence of his hero's achievements:—

¹ Page 51.



"They," says he, "who would dare to plead the authority of Lord Byron for their errors, must first be able to trace them to the same palliating sources,—to that sensibility, whose very excesses showed its strength and depth,—that stretch of imagination, to the very verge, perhaps, of what reason can bear without giving way,—that whole combination, in short, of grand but disturbing powers, which alone could be allowed to extenuate such moral derangement, but which, even in him thus dangerously gifted, were insufficient to excuse it."—P. 52.

We hold it impossible to be sufficiently grateful for the incomparable moral safety-lamp which our philosopher has here so skilfully and so considerately constructed for us, and by which he has contrived to throw a sort of ingenious wire-gauze round the flame which he exhibits, thus securing to us the benefit of light, without the danger of combustion! We do trust, that all grandmothers and maiden aunts will now toss to the winds their apprehensions, lest the fire-damp of youthful fancies should burst into explosion, from the contact of this perilous and subtle element. The most nervous of moralists must perceive that the precautions of our conductor have rendered such a crisis plainly impossible. Let all approach, then, and contemplate, without scruple or alarm, the splendours of that "interesting chapter in the history of the Poet's heart and mind" which exhibits his intoxicating successes, first with the vixen wife of a Venetian shopkeeper, and then with a ferocious trull, the wife of a baker, a virago of Amazonian strength and stature, who preserved her ascendancy by knocking her rivals down, and whom her illustrious lover himself could keep in order only by calling up the keenest lightnings of his eye! It would, indeed, have been lamentable if this most didactic exhibition should have been suppressed. Nothing can possibly be more authentic than the materials for it. The details are furnished by the immortal genius himself. The whole history of his *bonnes fortunes* is recorded by his own hand, at prodigious length, and,

evidently, with a lively relish of self-complacency and triumph: and they are given, by his chronicler, almost with religious fidelity, always excepting an occasional *hiatus*, excellently calculated to keep curiosity alive, and imagination active. The whole, we can assure our readers, is quite worthy to be preserved in cedar—together with the memoirs of that incomparable Aspasia, the renowned Harriette Wilson! So much for this inestimable chapter “in the history of the poet’s *heart and mind*!” So much for this glorious illustration of his vivacity and fancy, his admiration of beauty, and his insatiable yearning after affection! Never, we verily believe, was the cause of vice rendered much more exquisitely ridiculous and contemptible.

These most delectable adventures were followed up by a somewhat more august specimen of adultery; we allude to his intimacy with the celebrated Countess Guiccioli. This young lady was married, or rather sold, at the age of sixteen, to a rich nobleman of Romagna, aged sixty. His Lordship’s unwearied liberality of communication has put us as completely in possession of this affair, as it has of his Venetian recreations; and, besides, the Countess herself has been obliging enough to furnish Mr. Moore with a history of it, in the very purest Italian. “For some time,” he tells us, “*she was an Angiolina*, and *he* (the Count G.) a Marino Faliero, a good old man; but young Italian women are not satisfied with good old men:”—nor any other young women that we ever heard of. But then, other young women have not always the invaluable privilege enjoyed by those of Italy, namely, that of having husbands who, whether old or young, are a sort of trustees to shifting uses; retaining in themselves a legal estate and property, in the persons of their wives while the beneficial interest and usufruct seems to belong to the rest of the world. His Lordship’s residence at Ravenna was rendered exceedingly delightful, partly by

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the society of this lady, and partly by the opportunity it gave him of indulging his taste for turbulence and revolution. Italy, it will be remembered was, at that time, agitated by the plots of the Carbonari. Elements were abroad in wonderful harmony with the restless temperament of the bard. His time was accordingly pretty much divided between poetry, adultery, and insurrection. He entered deeply into the views and designs of the malcontents, and assisted them largely by his counsels and his purse. And yet, after all, never, it must surely be confessed, since the world began, was there a much more ridiculous or miserable specimen of a conspirator! He knew perfectly well that all letters were opened by the government; and yet the following is the style in which he writes to England:

“Be assured there are troublous times brewing for Italy; and as I never could keep out of a row in my life, it will be my fate, I dare say, to be over head and ears in it. But no matter; these are the stronger reasons for coming to see me soon.”—*Moore*, p. 305.

“I have besides another reason for desiring you to be speedy, which is, that there is *THAT* brewing in Italy which will speedily cut off all security of communication, and set all your Anglo-travellers flying in every direction, with their usual fortitude in foreign tumults. The Spanish and French affairs have set the Italians in a ferment; and no wonder: they have been too long trampled on. This will make a sad scene for your exquisite traveller, but not for the resident, who naturally wishes a people to redress itself. I shall, if permitted by the natives, remain to see what will come of it, and *perhaps to take a turn with them, like Dugald Dalgetty and his horse, in case of business*; for I shall think it by far the most interesting spectacle and moment in existence, to see the Italians send the barbarians of all nations back to their own dens. I have lived long enough among them to feel more for them as a nation than for any other people in existence. But they want union, and they want principle; and I doubt their success. However, they will try probably, and if they do, it will be a good cause. No Italian can hate an Austrian more than I do: unless it be the English, the Austrians seem to me the most obnoxious race under the sky.”—P. 316, 317.

“I am in the third act of my tragedy; but whether it will be

finished or not, I know not; I have, at this present, too many passions of my own on hand, to do justice to those of the dead. Besides the vexations mentioned in my last, I have incurred a quarrel with the Pope's carabiniers, or gens-d'armes, who have petitioned the Cardinal against my liveries, as resembling too nearly their own lousy uniform. They particularly object to the epaulettes, which all the world with us have on, upon gala days. My liveries are of the colours conforming to my arms, and have been the family hue since the year 1066.

"I have sent a trenchant reply, as you may suppose; and have given to understand that, if any soldados of that respectable corps insult my servants, I will do likewise by their gallant commanders; and I have directed my ragamuffins, six in number, who are tolerably savage, to defend themselves in case of aggression; and, on holidays and gaudy days, I shall arm the whole set, including myself, in case of accidents or treachery. I used to play pretty well at the broad-sword, once upon a time at Angelo's; but I should like the pistol, our national buccaneer weapon, better, though I am out of practice at present. However, I can 'wink and hold out mine iron.' It makes me think (the whole thing does) of Romeo and Juliet—'now, Gregory, remember thy *smashing* blow.'"—P. 334.

"Politics here still savage and uncertain. However, we are all in our 'bandaliers' to join the 'Highlanders if they cross the Forth,' i. e. to crush the Austrians if they pass the Po. The rascals!—and that dog L——I, to say their subjects are *happy*!—If ever I come back, I'll work some of these ministers."—P. 347.

"I can't say any thing to you about Italy, for the government here look upon me with a suspicious eye, as I am well-informed. Pretty fellows!—as if I, a solitary stranger, could do any mischief. It is because I am fond of rifle and pistol shooting, I believe; for they took the alarm at the quantity of cartridges I consumed—the wiseacres!"—P. 359.

"Of the state of things here it would be difficult, and not very prudent, to speak at large, the Huns opening all letters. I wonder if they can read them when they have opened them; if so, they may see, in my MOST LEGIBLE HAND, THAT I THINK THEM DAMNED SCOUNDRELS AND BARBARIANS, and THEIR EMPEROR a FOOL, and themselves more fools than he; all which they may send to Vienna, for any thing I care. They have got themselves masters of the Papal police, and are bullying away; but some day or other they will pay for all: it may not be very soon, because these unhappy Italians have no consistency among themselves; but I suppose that Providence will get tired of them at last."—P. 382.

Now is it possible for mortal gravity to contemplate all this without being tempted to invoke the spirit of Cervantes? What would that mighty master have given, for such a picture of a deep and subtle agitator? Here was a dealer in plots and conspiracies, conscious that the ten thousand eyes and ears of a jealous despotism were fixed upon him, and that not a syllable he penned could escape inspection,—and yet unable to write to his friend or his publisher without some petty explosion of his noble impatience, which might give due notice to the “*scoundrels and barbarians*,” of the sedition he was helping to brew within their territories! With an enthusiasm so “stirring, audible, and full of vent,” it would have been the consummation of folly to expect any thing else than that which actually happened—namely, that *his savour should be abhorred* by the government under which he was living, and that the land would speedily vomit him forth. Had he been anxious to bring sentence of banishment, ruin, and proscription, on himself and his friends, it would be hard to show how he could have laboured more effectually, for the accomplishment of that purpose. But this was one of the incorrigible puerilities of Byron’s character. He thought and talked about freedom like a turbulent and contumacious schoolboy. He was always impatient to be acting over again the mutinies of Harrow. The love of liberty never became a healthy principle in his constitution. It was an element which fell into combination with his spleen, and his caprice, and his eagerness for distinction; consequently, instead of diffusing a salutary glow throughout his system and complexion, it was perpetually breaking out into foul and angry eruptions, which betrayed the morbid fermentation going on within. All this while, be it remembered, he was a fastidious patrician,—proud of his birth, and tenacious of his rank and privilege—an aristocrat, not merely to the back bone, but to the very tips of his fingers. He

had a positive loathing for all that was plebeian ; and was scarcely more proud of the might of his genius, than he was of the smallness, and whiteness, and delicacy of his hands, which he regarded as indications of the purity and nobleness of his blood¹. It is difficult to imagine any thing much more absurd than this monstrous combination of the peer and the radical. Nothing, in truth, could well be more crude than all the imaginings of this extraordinary personage, relative to political subjects : we say imaginings,—for opinions he had none. He had certain impulses and feelings, but no fixed scheme of thought. At one time we find him raving about Napoleon, and predicting his political resurrection, just in the same spirit that a gentleman of the turf bets upon a favourite horse ; and finally lamenting his downfall, because, after him, none but fools were left to govern mankind, and because a rod of iron was better than a leaden sceptre. At another time, we hear him invoking swift perdition on all existing dynasties, and declaring that nothing would do but an universal republic. And then, again, we catch him confessing that “ riches are power, and that poverty is slavery all the world over, and that one sort of establishment or government is no better for the people than another.” It would be idle to ascribe the faculty of judging, upon such matters, to one who was capable of venting such whimsical and silly contradictions. In fact, he was just about as much impelled by hatred of tyranny, and ardour for the cause of national independence, as a fox-hunting squire is carried over five-barred gates by a virtuous abhorrence of vermin, and a tender regard for the poultry-yards of his neighbours. No one who has

¹ “ Lord Byron often boasted of his being, at heart, devoutly aristocratical ; and confessed that he had completely inherited his mother’s disposition, who, according to him, was, perhaps, the proudest woman in England.”—*Millingen’s Memoirs on Greece*, p. 15, note.

ever studied his character can doubt that, to him, the whole game was little more than a source of pleasurable excitement. It was poetry reduced to action. It filled his mind with splendid images; it absorbed much of the corrosive inquietude of his nature; it animated him with the hope of a new career of eminence and renown; it afforded him, as he thought, an opportunity of showing the world that, after all, he was born for some higher purpose than that of writing verses. And therefore, probably, it was that, when rebellion lay in his way, he was very glad to take it up. In short, it verily was his good pleasure to take the diversion of insurrection: and he seems to have thought it a matter of profound indifference whether he followed the sport in his own country, or any other.

When driven from Ravenna, his first migration was to Pisa: and thither the Guiccioli accompanied him, together with her father and brother, who were involved in the proscription, and who, according to the very comfortable "*usages*" of Italy, were not in the slightest degree discomposed by being domiciled with their fair relative and her illustrious paramour. The removal took place in the Autumn of 1821, and the residence of the noble exile was in the Lanfranchi palace, an ancient and massive structure, of colossal dimensions, and apparently imperishable strength, and which, as might reasonably be expected, was haunted.

"I have got," he says, "into a famous old feudal palazzo, on the Arno, large enough for a garrison, with dungeons below, and cells in the walls, and so full of ghosts, that the learned Fletcher—(my valet)—begged leave to change his room, and then refused to occupy his *new* room, because there were more ghosts in that than in the other."

From this place of perturbed spirits he was soon driven, not by the ghosts, but by powers of flesh and blood, which

proved to be much more awkward customers. In consequence of a casual encounter with the guard at Pisa, he found it necessary to remove for a time to Monte Nero, a country house in the vicinity of Leghorn; and it was at this period that he formed his memorable coalition with Leigh Hunt. We have no room to dwell on this Holy Alliance. The whole affair is fresh in the recollection of the public: it is, therefore, only necessary to state that, from the representations of Mr. Moore, it appears clear that Lord Byron was the original author of the scheme. His motives were, "in the first place, his wish to second the views of his friend Shelley in inviting Hunt to join him in Italy; and, in the next, a desire to avail himself of Hunt's experience, as an editor, in the favourite project of a periodical work." He was in want, it seems, of some such vomitory, for discharging without restraint, or obstruction, the villainous congestions of spleen, and ribaldry, of sedition and profaneness, that were now habitually forming in his mind. His temper had long been growing more and more intractable and wayward, more impatient of counsel and remonstrance, and more inflexibly resolved on outraging and defying the public opinion. This arrogant wilfulness is perpetually betraying itself in his correspondence, more especially that with his publisher Mr. John Murray, whom he was not always in the habit of treating with very ceremonious consideration. The following is a specimen.

"These (pecuniary) matters must be arranged with Mr. Douglas Kinnaird. He is my trustee, and a man of honour. To him you can state all your mercantile reasons, which you might not like to state to me personally, such as 'heavy season'—'flat public'—'don't go off'—'lordship writes too much'—'won't take advice'—'declining popularity'—'deduction for the trade'—'make very little'—'generally lose by him'—'pirated edition'—'foreign edition'—'severe criticisms,' &c. with other hints and howls for an oration, which I leave Douglas, who is an orator, to answer.



"You can also state them more freely to a third person, as between you and me they could only produce some smart postscripts, which would not adorn our mutual archives.

"I am sorry for the Queen, and that's more than you are."—*Moore*, vol. ii. p. 517.

Finding, therefore, that the explosions he prepared did not go off so freely and rapidly as he desired, under the management of his operatives in London, he was glad to set up, on the spot, a sort of infernal machine of his own, into which he might cram all the mephitic and combustible materials he could muster, and keep the match in his own hand. But the inexplicable part of the history is, that he should ever think of Leigh Hunt as a confederate in this high-minded enterprise,—Leigh Hunt,—the very man of whom he had formerly written in the following complimentary language to Mr. Moore!

Venice, June 1, 1818.

" * * * * Hunt's letter is probably the exact piece of vulgar coxcombry you might expect from his situation. He is a good man, with some poetical elements in his chaos; but spoilt by the Christ-Church Hospital and a Sunday newspaper,—to say nothing of the Surry Jail, which conceited him into a martyr. But he is a good man. When I saw 'Rimini,' in MS., I told him that I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was, that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some such cant; and, when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless; so I said no more to him, and very little to any one else.

"He believes his trash of vulgar phrases tortured into compound barbarisms, to be *old English*; and we may say of it as Aimwell says of Captain Gibbet's regiment, when the captain calls it an 'old corps,'—'the *oldest* in Europe, if I may judge by your uniform.' He sent out his 'Foliage' by Percy Shelley * * *, and, of all the ineffable Centaurs that were ever begotten by Self-love upon a Night-mare, I think this monstrous Sagittary the most prodigious. He (Leigh H.) is an honest Charlatan, who has persuaded himself into a belief of his own impostures, and talks Punch in pure simplicity of heart, taking himself (as poor Fitzgerald said of *himself* in the Morning Post) for *Vates* in both senses, or nonsenses, of the word. Did you look at the translations of his own which he prefers to Pope

and Cowper, and says so?—Did you read his skimble-skamble about * * being at the head of his own *profession*, in the *eyes* of those who followed it? I thought that Poetry was an *art*, or an *attribute*, and not a *profession*;—but be it one, is that * * * * * at the head of *your* profession in *your* eyes? I'll be curst if he is of *mine*, or ever shall be. He is the only one of us (but of us he is not) whose coronation I would oppose. Let them take Scott, Campbell, Crabbe, or you, or me, or any of the living, and throne him;—but not this new Jacob Behmen, this * * * * * whose pride might have kept him true, even had his principles turned as perverted as his *soi-disant* poetry.

“But Leigh Hunt is a good man, and a good father—see his Odes to all the Masters Hunt;—a good husband—see his Sonnet to Mrs. Hunt;—a good friend—see his Epistles to different people;—and a great coxcomb, and a very vulgar person in every thing about him. But that's not his fault, but of circumstances.”—*Moore*, pp. 176, 177.

The man¹, be it observed, upon whom his lordship is here pouring out derision and contempt, was the martyr whom he had visited in prison; the worthy whom he had compared to Pym and Hampden; and, finally, the ally by whose aid he was to charge through the embattled columns of obsolete prejudice, and peradventure to bear down before him “the rotten privilege and custom” of all that was held venerable and sacred in the world. It

¹ It is entirely alien from our office to enter into any discussion of the conduct of Moore towards Leigh Hunt. We are nevertheless tempted to advert to certain letters addressed by Mr. Moore to Mr. Hunt between the years 1810 and 1814, and which have recently been made public by the latter; and in which it must have been the intention of the writer, either most egregiously to mystify his correspondent, or else to flatter him almost “beneath abhorring.” We take it for granted that these letters are genuine: and, if so, there never, surely, was a much more flagrant instance, either of deliberate mockery, or of crawling adulation. It must remain for the public to pronounce what respect they think due to the moral or literary judgments of the man who could pen such epistles, and yet stigmatize, as *he* does, a confederacy with his former friend and correspondent as an unworthy and degrading alliance. For ourselves, we must own, that there is about all this, a savour of turpitude and treachery, whereat our nostrils are in great indignation.

should, however, in all fairness, be mentioned that his own account of the project and the confederacy is somewhat different from that which is given by his biographer. In a letter to Mrs. Somebody, the date of which is not given, though he speaks more respectfully of the oracle of Co-caigne, he seems, by implication, to disclaim all hope of finding him a valuable and effective confederate, and represents himself as impelled to the scheme, mainly, by his anxiety to raise up the fallen fortunes of the literary adventurer, and political martyr.

" * * * * I presume that you, at least, know enough of me to be sure that I could have no intention to insult Hunt's poverty. On the contrary, I honour him for it; for I know what it is, having been as much embarrassed as ever he was, without perceiving ought in it to diminish an honourable man's self-respect. If you mean to say that, had he been a wealthy man, I would have joined in this Journal, I answer in the negative. * * * I engaged in the Journal from good-will towards him, added to respect for his character, literary and personal; and no less for his political courage, as well as regret for his present circumstances: I did this in the hope that he might, with the same aid from literary friends, of literary contributions (which is requisite for all Journals of a mixed nature), render himself independent.


* * * *

" I have always treated him, in our personal intercourse, with such scrupulous delicacy, that I have forborne intruding advice, which I thought might be disagreeable, lest he should impute it to what is called 'taking advantage of a man's situation.' "—*Moore*, p. 629.

We shall abstain from all attempt to unravel the mazes of this poor mystery:

——— longa est injuria, longæ
Ambages."

Thus much, however, appears undeniable,—that the torrent of Byron's genius, which was daily becoming more turbid and impetuous, lost itself, at length, in this dismal swamp.



LIFE AND CHARACTER

It was during this glorious coalition, and while Hunt was established at the Lanfranchi Palace, that Mr. Shelley perished in a sailing excursion. His remains, and those of one of his companions named Williams, were cast ashore some time afterwards in a state unfit for removal. It was therefore determined to reduce them to ashes; and preparations were accordingly made for that purpose on the sea-shore, between the bay of Spezia and Leghorn.


"You can have no idea," says his lordship, "what an extraordinary effect such a funeral pile has on a desolate shore, with mountains in the back ground, and the sea before, and the singular appearance the salt and frankincense gave to the flame."
—*Moore*, vol. ii. p. 609.

Neither can we have any adequate idea of the scene that followed these classic obsequies. It is thus described by Mr. Galt.

"When the duty was done, and the ashes collected, they—the *mourners*—dined and drank much together, and bursting from the calm mastery with which they had repressed their feelings during the solemnity, gave way to frantic exultation. *They were all drunk*; they sang, they shouted, and their barouche was driven like a whirlwind through the forest."

We know not whether the silence of Mr. Moore respecting this "dæmoniac revelry" is to be understood as indicative of any doubts respecting the fact, or whether it is to be ascribed to his considerate care for the reputation of his hero. Be that as it may, every one must agree with Mr. Galt, that, short of positive crime, no orgies can well be imagined more outrageously abominable.

The next migration of the exile was to Genoa. The encounter with the military at Pisa, and a subsequent affray between the young Count Gamba with a Swiss servant, had sickened the Tuscan government of its noble visitants; and the whole party were thus compelled to seek for another city of refuge. After some hesitation



between Switzerland and Genoa, the latter was preferred. The Exodus accordingly took place in September, 1822; and, if Mr. Galt's account be correct, must have been sufficiently diverting and fantastical. "The caravan consisted of five carriages, seven servants, nine horses, a monkey, a bull-dog, two cats, three pea-fowls, a harem of hens, books, saddles, and fire arms, with a chaos of furniture;" all followed up by Mr. Hunt, and Mrs Hunt, and the Masters and Misses Hunt. It seems pretty clear, on all hands, that by this time Byron began to perceive that he had drained the goblet both of literary renown, and of sensual pleasure, nearly to its dregs. The utter and damning failure of the Liberal gave him mortifying notice of the one, and the symptoms of premature decay furnished him with irresistible certainty of the other. His constitution had for some time been giving way under the effects of that unnatural mode of life to which he had been driven by his irregular, unquiet, and weary spirit, almost ever since his exile from his country. He seldom rose till a late hour; his vigils were protracted till long after midnight; and his lucubrations were enlivened by frequent and prodigal resort to the excitements of the spirit-flask. This most deplorable fact may be collected from the scattered confessions and intimations of Mr. Moore. It is more directly and broadly stated in the recent publication of Dr. Millingen, whose situation as surgeon to the corps of Suliotes in Lord Byron's pay, furnished him with abundant opportunities of observing his personal habits. This gentleman expressly tells us that his Lordship "had unfortunately contracted the habit of drinking immoderately *every evening*. Almost at every page (of his reading) he would take a glass of wine, and often *undiluted Hollands*, till he felt himself under the full influence of liquor. He would then pace up and down the room till three or four o'clock in the morning; and these hours,

he often confessed, were most propitious to the inspirations of his muse¹." Here, then, we have the melancholy certainty, that one of the finest geniuses of the age had sunk to almost the lowest deep of human degradation, the habit of solitary intemperance; and that the muse that dictated Don Juan was little better than a debauched and sottish jade! There is something so dismal in this disclosure, that it almost disarms indignation. It is scarcely possible to imagine a spectacle more saddening, or more appalling, than this most inglorious termination of a career which began so brightly. In his own Manfred he speaks of human nature as "half-dust, half-deity:" what can be more miserable than thus to see the mire and dirt gradually usurping upon the deity, and, at last, completely overwhelming and engulfing it?

The most robust constitution must have ultimately sunk under this frightful course of violence. But there was yet another cause of decay. He was making perpetual inroads on his stamina by the immoderate use of drastic medicine. The two evils which he dreaded worse than death, were insanity and corpulence. His apprehensions of the first of these calamities were constantly plunging him into wretched meditation on the suicides which had occurred in his own family; and thus were rapidly destroying the healthful tone of his mind. His abomination of fatness, on the other hand, was incessantly tempting him to measure his wrists and waist, and to keep them within due compass, by a course of discipline and diet which was equally fatal to the energies of his body. All these causes conspired to make him, during his later years, perhaps one of the most comfortless of hypochondriacs. Mr. Millingen affirms that he was often plunged into a condition bordering on despair. He

¹ Millingen's *Memoirs on Greece*, pp. 9, 10.



had long ago surfeited on all the delights this world has to offer. He "had melted down his youth" in all the varieties of voluptuousness. His manhood had been drugged to intoxication by the *new wine* of popular applause. In spite of himself, his heart must perpetually have been echoing, with sepulchral hollowness, the words of the Preacher—" *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.*" In short, the spirit of life was well nigh gone. What was to be done to work the vapid remainder into something like effervescence and agitation? If any thing could do this, it would be the breath that stirs in the regions of martial and political adventure. This he had already tried in Italy, and it probably afforded him some partial and transient relief. Whither was he to look now for a repetition of the excitement, become of late more than ever necessary to his very existence? At one time, his thoughts had been directed towards the South American continent; at another time to Spain; but, at the present moment, Greece seemed to offer precisely the sphere of enterprise which his restless spirit was in need of. He accordingly provided himself with three splendid helmets, formed after the most approved classical model, and "out he went a colonelling" against his old friends the Osmanlis.

It is very curious to see the different aspects under which the same course of action will present itself to different minds.

"In the breeze that now bore him towards his beloved Greece," (chanteth Mr. Moore,) "the voice of his youth seemed again to speak. Before the titles of hero, of benefactor, to which he now aspired, that of poet, however pre-eminent, faded into nothing. His love of freedom, his generosity, his thirst for the new and adventurous,—all were re-awakened; and even the bodings that still lingered at the bottom of his heart but made the course before him more precious, from his consciousness of its brevity, and from the high and self-ennobling resolution he had now taken, to turn what yet remained of it gloriously to account."—Vol. ii. p. 669.

"It was expected," says the less courtly Mr. Galt, "when he sailed for Greece, (nor was the expectation unreasonable with those who believe imagination and passion to be of the same element,) that the enthusiasm, which flamed so highly in his verse, was the spirit of action, and would prompt him to undertake some great enterprise. But he was only an artist; he could describe bold adventures, and represent high feeling, as other gifted individuals give eloquence to canvass and activity to marble; but he did not possess the wisdom necessary for the instruction of councils. I do, therefore, venture to say, that in embarking for Greece, he was not entirely influenced by such exoterical motives as the love of glory, or the aspirations of heroism. His laurels had for some time ceased to flourish; the sear and yellow, the mildew and decay, had fallen upon them; and he was aware that the bright round of his fame was oavling from the full, and showing the dim rough edge of waning."—*Galt*, p. 274.

Now let us hear his Lordship's own account of the matter to Mr. Millingen.

"Heartily weary of the monotonous life I had led in Italy for several years; sickened with pleasure; more tired of scribbling than the public, perhaps, is of reading my lucubrations;—I felt the urgent necessity of giving a completely new direction to the course of my ideas; and the active, dangerous, yet glorious scenes of the military career *struck my fancy*, and became congenial to my taste. After all, should this new mode of existence fail to afford me the satisfaction I anticipate, it will, at least, present me with the means of making a *dashing exit* from the scene of this world, where the part I was acting had grown excessively dull."—*Millingen*, p. 6, 7.

In August, 1823, he accordingly embarked for Cephalonia, where he lingered for a considerable time, waiting, apparently, until the dissensions of the Greeks should subside into unanimity. He might almost as reasonably have waited until the ruins of the Parthenon should rearrange themselves into their original symmetry and grandeur. It was during his stay in this island that his life was varied by the curious episode of a series of religious conferences with Dr. Kennedy. It is impossible to regard the efforts of this very worthy and amiable

man, for the conversion of Lord Byron, without sentiments of profound respect and esteem; but it is also quite impossible for us to be blind to the unwelcome truth, that he was utterly inadequate to an encounter with the daring, reckless, and irreverent spirit of his catechumen. We greatly fear, that, under the show of candour and of patience, the pupil was only mystifying his venerable and simple-hearted instructor. He professed that he, truly, was no enemy to Christianity; that he did not wish to pass his days in unbelief; that he only desired to ascertain whether or not the Bible contained the will of God; and that, if it could be shown that it did, he must allow that it would become every rational being to take it for his rule of life. All this while, nothing on earth was more likely than that the whole of these edifying disputations might have made their appearance in the very next canto of *Don Juan*, if the poet had lived to write it. Instead of suffering the scoffer to dwell upon collateral and comparatively unimportant questions, the Doctor, surely, should have pressed him home with this text:—"He that is willing to do the will of my Father, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Instead of this, he suffered the controversy to run to waste upon points of subordinate moment, far removed from the centre and the core of the grand question; whether, for instance, the Doctor had read Barrow and Stillingfleet; whether Satan was really and literally summoned into the presence of the Deity; what was the true meaning of the word grace; what was the import of such and such a prophecy; what were the merits of the contest respecting predestination, or eternal punishments? All of them matters in which a disputant would be glad to take refuge from the pursuit and urgency of those plain duties, the observance of which is, humanly speaking, absolutely necessary to the success of all our inquiries into deeper matters. But, without fur-

ther consideration of what the missionary *should* have done, there is one thing most clearly which he *should not* have done; he should not have exacted an audience of twelve mortal hours for the purpose of his demonstrations. The requisition was almost merciless enough to overpower the long-suffering of the maturest Christian on earth: to the patience of a mere inquirer after Christianity, it must have been, beyond all reasonable doubt, utterly fatal and destructive.

But to return from the moral regeneration of Lord Byron to the political regeneration of Greece—two attempts, to all human appearance, of about equal promise. When the Liberator arrived at Missolonghi, he found himself in the midst of disturbed and mutinous elements, which a poet might, perhaps, delight to picture, but which no poet, except himself, could ever have dreamed of controlling. "The whole population," says Mr. Moore, "presented such a fermenting mass of insubordination and discord, as was far more likely to produce warfare among themselves, than with the enemy." And the person on whom every eye was fixed as the Grand Pacificator and Deliverer was—what?—a man bred in camps, or in cabinets? one practised in military adventure, or regularly trained in the business of political agitation, or graduated in the arduous craft of moulding the conflicting passions, tempers, and interests of men to his own purposes? Nothing of all this! The Regenerator of Greece had, up to that moment, been, for the most part, a Sardnapalus—a Sybarite—a minion clothed in purple and fine linen, and fitted to dwell only in kings' houses—a reed which must be shaken with every wind that blows in the tempestuous climate of faction and revolution. And yet this was the man whom the Greeks were taught to look upon as more than a prophet—a conquering and irresistible Messiah! It can form no reasonable ground of charge against him,

that he had neither the iron sinews, nor the joints of adamant, nor the case of triple steel, nor the lightning glance of military intuition, nor the depth of expedient and resource,—all of which were indispensable for the effective and successful occupation of the post which he had chosen. It would have been miraculous indeed, if he had emerged from the visionary world which he had long inhabited, thus armed and thus accomplished. The wonder is, that it should ever, for a moment, have entered his head, that he was formed to plunge into this “wild abyss” of anarchy and confusion, and to buffet his way through the embroilment of its surging fires and conflicting atoms. Yet so it was: and, doubtless, when once he had taken the leap, he summoned all the energies he was master of, and took at once a station and an attitude which bespoke heroic daring and achievement. He burned with military ardour and chivalry—such is Colonel Stanhope’s representation of him—and prepared to proceed with the projected expedition against Lepanto, of which he was appointed commander (ἀρχιστράτηγος!). But, after all, he appears to have plunged into the adventure, less in the spirit of a great and self-confiding leader, than in that of a man who devotes himself to the infernal gods, covers up his head, rushes into the thick of the havoc, and leaves his life a sacrifice. Indeed, he himself confessed as much to Dr. Millingen:—“Would to Heaven,” he said, “the day were arrived, in which rushing, sword in hand, on a body of Turks, and fighting like one weary of existence, I shall meet immediate, painless death—the object of my wishes!”

We are miserable judges of military or revolutionary operations, and shall, therefore, abstain from all attempt to detail or to criticise the measures pursued by the leaders of the insurrection. We shall, accordingly, content ourselves with stating, that the expedition to Lepanto was abandoned, in consequence of the mutiny and

dismissal of the Suliotes, who constituted a chief part of the force intended for that enterprise, and that Byron did not live to witness any other effort. There was one scheme, however, entertained by him, so extravagantly wild, that we are almost disposed to regard it, with Mr. Galt, as an indication that his "part in the world was nearly done," and "that his mind was passing from him." His first great step, we have seen, was "from poesy to heroism;" his next was to be from heroism to diplomacy. When Greece had wrought out her deliverance, he was to leave her to settle her own government; he was then to purchase, or build, a schooner, (as if, says Mr. Galt, the means of conveyance were difficult to procure,) and he was to sail to the United States, as ambassador of the Greeks, and to prevail on that very chivalrous and romantic personage, brother Jonathan, to take the lead in recognising the federation of Greece as an independent state. This done, England would be compelled to follow the example; the fate of Greece would be permanently fixed; and she would enter into all her rights as a member of the great commonwealth of Christian Europe. This was the last service he was to perform for her; and a very eminent service he conceived it would be! What the cabinets of Christendom were to be about during the long-protracted struggle, or after the final triumph, he does not appear to have asked himself; neither to have considered whether it was probable that the great powers of Europe would wait to receive their impulse from the other side of the Atlantic.

But the days of Byron were now nearly numbered. In January, 1824, he had been imprudent enough to swim a considerable distance, when the sea was rough and the night cold; and, in the course of two or three days after, he complained of a pain in all his bones, which continued, more or less, to the time of his death. Soon after this, toil, agitation, and disappointment, began to do their

work upon his shattered constitution ; and on the 15th of February, after a desperate carouse, he was seized with a short but dreadful convulsion fit. The destructive process was completed by another act of imprudence. On the 9th of April, while drenched with rain, and yet in violent perspiration from the exercise of riding, he persisted in returning to his house by water. Rheumatism and fever were the consequence, and it was soon evident, or at least highly probable, that his stamina would give way under the attack. The account of his last days, as given by Mr. Moore, differs in no material particulars from those already before the public. There is one circumstance in the melancholy history, deeply deserving of notice. The mind, which was proof against the influences of piety, was here abjectly servile to those of superstition. He was haunted, for instance, by the prophecy of some old spæ-wife, that his 37th year would be fatal to him. He recollected, with positive dismay, that he had embarked from Genoa on a Friday—for Friday was always a *dies nefastus* in his calendar. Friday was unfit even for the ceremony of a first visit ; nay, he had once sent away a Genoese tailor who brought him home a new coat on a Friday ! Bleeding, it is well known, he obstinately refused till it was too late to be of use, having got a notion that more havoc is made with the lancet than the lance : but, nevertheless, when Medicine was beginning to shake her head at his case, he seemed firmly resolved to appeal from her to Sorcery. He gravely and doggedly desired Mr. Millingen to look him out a very old and very ugly witch, in order that she might ascertain whether he had not been stricken with the evil eye, and might devise some means to dissolve the spell ! All this while, religion never seemed to enter his thoughts ; or, if it did, it was only to be resisted and repelled. At one moment, Mr. M. heard him say, “ Shall I sue for mercy ? ” Then, after a long pause, he added, “ Come, come, no weak-

ness! let's be a man to the last!" Soon after this, he expired. When his remains were examined, the frequent complaint which he had been heard to make of having "an old feel," was clearly interpreted. The ravages of intemperance were then fearfully manifested¹. The heart was flaccid, and its muscular fibres pale; the cranium exhibited all the appearances usually incident to advanced age; and the liver betrayed the commencement of those changes, uniformly produced by an immoderate indulgence in spirituous liquors. The tenement was, in effect prematurely ruinous. Nothing but the most dismal wretchedness could, in all human probability, have been the consequence of a protracted occupation of it.

Thus terminated the career of a man who, beyond all controversy, has made magnificent contributions towards the mere intellectual wealth and grandeur of his country. And yet, in spite of our admiration for all this mental power, we can scarcely give utterance to the painful emotions with which we rise from the contemplation of the whole work before us. On the one hand we have the life, and the deeds, and the correspondence, and the journalizing soliloquies, of one who may really be said to have deified his own ungovernable passions; and on the other, we have the *melliti verborum globuli* administered, even to loathing, by his devoted and almost slavish apologist: and we actually despair of conveying to our readers any conception of the effect produced by this alternation of flavours, otherwise than by requesting them to imagine what would be the operation upon their own palates, of a succession of biscuits, hotly and most diabolically peppered, and varied at intervals by a course of unsubstantial and sugared confectionry. We potently believe that the poet himself, if he could now taste the preparation, would turn away from its "luscious vices," after the

¹ Millingen, p. 143.

first yearnings of self-complacency were over. Honey, we believe, has sometimes been employed for the purpose of embalming and preserving a festering carcase; and it seems to us an apt emblem of the effort here made to sweeten the memory of dissoluteness and impiety. In a merely literary point of view, the merits of the work appear to us nearly on a level with its moral pretensions. In its style, it often strikes us as neither masculine nor feminine. It has neither the manly vigour and simplicity of the one, nor the unaffected sweetness and delicacy of the other. There is a sort of fantastic, unnatural, elaborate falsetto about it, which is often insufferably tiresome. When Mr. Moore was contemplating the life of Sheridan, he was told by Lord Byron that he could find no model for his work equal to Johnson's *Life of Savage*. One would imagine that the biographer had actually placed that pattern before him throughout the present performance; not, however, for the purpose of imbibing the spirit of that incomparable specimen, but with a perverse ambition to avoid all its peculiar excellencies.

We have already adverted to the artifices which have been so prodigally resorted to by Mr. Moore, in order to turn the edge of the public indignation, so long and so relentlessly directed against the character of his hero. We have seen that all his worst aberrations from right have here been generously ascribed to the influence of disturbing forces beyond his control, or to certain peculiarities inherent in his temper and constitution. His disdainful estimate of mankind is attributed to a noble and innate detestation of hypocrisy; his outrageous defiance of public opinion, to the ungenerous persecution which drove him to desperation, and called up from the depths of his nature a principle of reckless and savage resistance; his range of licence and profligacy to that desolation of heart which came over him, together with the ruin of his domestic prospects, and the "shivering of his

nousehold gods;" his habitual scorn for sacred things, to his abhorrence of bigotry and priestcraft, and to his disgust at the unblushing effrontery with which the practice of men too frequently gives the lie to their professions; his distaste for all the decencies and sanctities of life, to the fastidious impatience of a towering and transcendent intellect. These are the topics which, with "most damnable iteration," are perpetually paraded before us, throughout this blessed "labour of love!" We hear of nothing but lacerated sensibilities, and withered hopes—of volcanic fires which ravage while they illuminate—and of self-tormenting energies which consume and tear the energumen, while they astonish the world with feats of super-human strength. In the midst of the "wanton heed and giddy cunning" of this melodious maze of sophistry, a correct and attentive ear may always discern one cuckoo note—one eternal harping—in odious discord with the severe harmonies of truth. The supremacy of talent above virtue will, after all, be found to be the *subject*, which is decorated and disguised by this tedious *concerto*, and its everlasting *variations*. It is true that, occasionally, the mighty *maestro* will change his hand for a moment; and then a few notes are heard of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment! But one can generally perceive that the voice is, here, faint, constrained, and unnatural. He can never keep up the strain long together. He soon falls back into his old tune; and when he is descanting on the worst excesses of this idol, the whole burden of his song will be found, literally, resolvable into this:—"Not quite correct or defensible, these things, it must be confessed; but then, you know, his stupendous and eccentric genius!" To all which, we presume, the proper *response* may be equally concise:—"Superlative abilities, to be sure; but then, you know, his pernicious abuse and vile prostitution of the gift!"

The correspondence printed in the second volume is

described by Mr. Moore as a "costly treasure, equal, if not superior, in vigour, variety, and liveliness, to any that have yet adorned this branch of our literature." These are large words, which the writer of them does not, perhaps, expect to have very accurately measured. They will be found, however, on examination, not to be very much too big for the truth. There is, undoubtedly, in these letters, a prodigal exhibition of various talent—a masterly freedom of hand—a wonderful command of the English language—a matchless versatility—and extraordinary powers of entertainment. With the exception of a very large amount of unimportant and worthless scraps—(which, however, swell the volume and its price)—the collection is evidently the produce of a most original and capacious mind: and yet the perusal of them leaves behind an impression, on the whole, decidedly revolting. The letters are full of a dashing, reckless, desperate vivacity, which sometimes degenerates into flippancy, and sometimes swells into insolence and swagger. They perpetually remind us of the Corsair; "there is a laughing devil in their sneer." They are, moreover, frequently broken by those ominous lacunæ, which we have already remarked in the previous portions of his lordship's correspondence, and which give very intelligible notice that much has been omitted of which this canting, fastidious, hypocritical world is not worthy. Enough, however, is preserved to exhibit the *meteorology* of a mind wayward, capricious, and unmanageable as the elements. His friends, it appears, sometimes attempted to lash these winds, and to chain these waters. But they all found that—

" They might as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bate his usual height,"

as seek to control the current of such headstrong self-

will. Whenever they ventured to administer advice, they generally found him ready to—

“ Kill the physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease.”

They repeatedly protested against the shameful licentiousness of his writings, but all in vain. “ ’Tis my vocation, Hal,” was the substance of his reply. If they told him he was voluptuous, he said that he could not help it.

“ As to the cant of the day,” he added, “ I despise it, as I do all its other *finical* fashions, which become you as paint became the ancient Britons.”—“ If they had told me that the poetry (of Don Juan) was bad, I would have acquiesced; but they say the contrary, and then talk to me about *morality*—*the first time I ever heard the word from any body that was not a rascal that used it for a purpose. I maintain it is the most moral of poems*; but if people won’t discover the moral, that is their fault, and not mine.”

Again :—

“ You talk of refinement: are you at all more moral? are you *so* moral? No such thing. I know what the world is in England, by my own proper experience of the *best* of it—at least, of the *loftiest*; and I have described it every where as it is found in all places.”

It was this sort of *refinement* and prudery, he affirmed, which had banished the comedies of Congreve; and which, if tolerated, must cut away half of Ariosto, La Fontaine, Shakspeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Ford, and all the Charles II. writers; in short, something of most who have written before Pope, and are worth reading, and much of Pope himself. When Dryden was censured by Collier for the laxity of his writings, he said with calmness and candour, “ I plead guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine that can be truly accused of obscenity, immorality and profaneness, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend,

he will be glad of my repentance." Not so Lord Byron. He roundly appeals to the good old days when profaneness and indecency were fashionable ; protests against the degenerate delicacy of the present age ; and insists on restoring to literature its ancient privilege of licence and depravity. His friends would frequently represent to him the dangerous influence of his writings upon the religious principles of the public ; but he replied only by asking, who was ever altered by a poem ? Besides, " he could not understand why he was accused of irreligion ; he was no enemy to religion—he thought that people could never have enough, if they had any ; he was a better Christian than the parsons, who were all preaching against him, from Kentish Town and Oxford to Pisa—the *scoundrels of priests*, who do more harm to religion than all the infidels that ever forgot their catechisms." All this was said by a man whose life was almost one perpetual outrage upon every moral and religious sanction, and whose habitual propensity for mockery was such, that even when he did a generous or charitable act, he used to call it *purchasing a shilling's worth of salvation* ! Nothing could well be more hopeless than the endeavour to make any impression on such a mind by reasoning or expostulation. He had burst away from all the restraints of society, and seemed to feel a sort of rabid delight in making wild sport with " things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth." We literally do not perceive what there was (except the terrors of the law) to have withheld him, had he been a painter, from publishing the most bestially obscene drawings, if it had happened to " jump with his humour," or to promise the slightest advancement of his professional renown—for " who was ever altered by a picture ?"

There is one extract from his papers which we are satisfied will be perused with the bitterest disgust by every one, who has not prostituted his better judgment to a slav-

ish idolatry for mere intellectual power. In December, 1820, he saw the following paragraph in a newspaper:—
 “Lady Byron is, this year, the Lady Patroness at the Annual Charity Ball given at the Town Hall at Hinckley, Leicestershire, and Sir George Crew, Baronet, the principal Steward.” The occasion which this occurrence offered, of venting his vindictive spleen against his wife, was too tempting to be resisted. He accordingly solaced himself by the composition of a copy of verses, full, as Mr. Moore tells us, of strong and indignant feeling, every stanza concluding with the words “Charity Ball;” and the train-thought that predominates through the whole may be collected from the two opening stanzas.

“What matter the pangs of a husband and father,
 If his sorrows in exile be great or be small,
 So the Pharisee’s glories around her she gather,
 And the Saint patronizes her ‘Charity Ball?’

“What matters—a heart, which though faulty was feeling,
 Be driven to excesses which once could appal—
 That the Sinner should suffer is only fair dealing,
 As the Saint keeps her charity back for ‘the Ball?’”
 Vol. ii. p. 540.

Now the first question which will occur to any reasonable man, on perusing these venomous lines, is this. Is it to be concluded that every woman who is separated from her husband, for no guilt of her own, is bound to alienate herself from all open participation in benevolent designs, on pain of being stigmatized as a hypocrite and a Pharisee? So much for the affair, as Lord Byron alone is concerned in it. But it may be said that, in this instance, the secret of his resentment was vented only to his deaf paper, and was never uttered to the world; and that, therefore, it was but a harmless expression of his sense of fancied wrong. Well! let this (for a moment only) be allowed. We then have to demand of Mr. Thomas Moore, how he could have the heart to give publicity

to any portion of these atrocious stanzas? How is it that he—a gallant man—the poet and servant of the dames—the worshipper of female divinity; how is it he could endure the thought of thus insulting—we might almost say assassinating—the feelings of a virtuous and high-minded woman? There is, actually, nothing under heaven which could justify, or even palliate, such a disclosure, but the absolute *certainly* that the lady was, from the beginning to the end of their calamitous dissension, the culpable and aggressive party—that she was a heartless prude, a malicious vixen, who had wantonly sacrificed her husband's peace and reputation upon the altar of her own vindictive passions. *Pharisee* and *saint*, indeed! and all because she emerged, for a moment, from the shade of her widowhood, and took the station to which her rank entitled her, in promoting a design for the relief of her fellow-creatures—and this too from a man who spent half the income of her property, when once he could legally lay hands on it. The pages of Mr. Moore have holes and pits enough to bury certain rank abominations, with which the correspondence of his friend must otherwise have infected the imaginations, or revolted the feelings of his readers. How comes it that he was unable to find a hiding-place for this most unmanly and remorseless eruption? Well may we exclaim that the age of chivalry is gone; and that the age of sophisters, and literators, and intellect-mongers has succeeded. This, however, is but one, among a multitude of instances, which show that the biographer is under a sort of fascination—that a spell is upon him—and that his imagination, and all his faculties, *have gone a whoring*, if not after the Mammon of unrighteousness, at least after the Baalim of his friend's sublime but most unhallowed intellectual capacities; and the spirit of this vile idolatry *hath caused him to err; it hath taken away his heart*.

But we are weary of our task, and must bring it to a

close. We have little to add, except that, in the estimate of every unperverted mind, the character of Byron must now be a settled point. The events of his life, combined with the extracts from his *log-book* and correspondence, have done his memory this good office. After squeezing out from the mass of these volumes the cloying juices of Mr. Moore's *confectionry*, there remains a rank savour, such as comes up from the depths of an unsanctified and carnal mind. That the man was miserable it cannot be pleasing to know, though it may be instructive: the fact, however, seems certain, from his own repeated avowals. Let one more clause of his confessions suffice. "I have been reading," he says in his Journal, "Grimm's Correspondence. He repeats frequently, in speaking of a poet, or of a man of genius in any department, even in music, (Gretry, for instance,) that he must have *une ame qui se tourmente, un esprit violent*. How far this may be true, I know not,"—(we hold it to be most egregious cant); "but if it were, I should be a poet *par excellence*; for I have always had *une ame*, which *not only tormented itself, but every body else in contact with it*; and an *esprit violent*, which has almost left me without any *esprit* at all¹."

————— "Such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet!"

That he was amply gifted with qualities and graces which fitted him for the brightest sphere of social refinement, is beyond all dispute. But it is also evident, that there were elements in his nature which could combine into the worst varieties of grossness and impurity; and one portion of his history seems potently to have exemplified the truth, that—

"Lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
Can sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage."

Some powerfully redeeming properties he certainly appears to have possessed. He was accessible to frequent visitations of the spirit of gentleness ; and there is something in the depth of his attachment to his sister, Mrs. Leigh, and in his breathings of affection towards his daughter, which it is quite a relief to contemplate. He had, it would appear, in an extraordinary degree, the power of engaging the fidelity and good-will of his attendants, whom he seems to have treated with uniform kindness and indulgence. For friendship, he professed, like Napoleon, not to have any *genius* ; and of the permanence of all such intimacies he held distance and infrequency of intercourse to be the only true secrets. He was in a remarkable degree compassionate and humane : and liberal, sometimes even to munificence. It must, nevertheless, be stated, that generosity seems to have had much more of his respect, than justice. At Ravenna, for instance, his charities were such, that the poor of the place petitioned against his removal ; and yet, all this while he had debts at home for which he provided with tardiness, and with acknowledged reluctance. Upon the cause of Greece, it is well known, he was prepared to lavish the whole of his resources. This, indeed, may, partly at least, be considered as a venture for an immortality of heroic renown ; and in such a game, all subordinate interests are generally sacrificed without much pain or hesitation. It should, nevertheless, be remembered, to his honour, that when once he was among the Greeks, his generosity took every form which might win their affections and advance their interests.

“ They soon perceived,” says Mr. Millingen, “ that he was not a theoretical, but a practical friend to their country ; and the repeated acts of kindness and charity which he performed, in relief of the poor and distressed, and the heavy expenses which

he daily incurred for the furtherance of every plan and institution which he thought might advance the general good, showed them that he was not less alive to their private than he was to their public interests."—P. 102.

The vagueness and indistinctness of his notions on the subjects of politics and religion is almost pitiable. In politics, agitation seems to have been his favourite principle; no matter what was the cause, provided it were sufficiently turbulent and revolutionary. He had, at one time, a prodigious longing to come over and join the Ludites; and it is not at all clear to us, that, if he were living at this moment, he would not be in Ireland, by the side of that mighty hunter, Daniel O'Connell, ready to cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of civil war. It is, indeed, just possible, that he may have contrived to persuade himself, that, in yielding to these capricious impulses, he did but obey the promptings of a generous spirit, at mortal enmity with tyranny and persecution; while, in reality, he was only indulging his passion for a *row*, which, by his own confession, always ruled him with an irresistible charm. That he had little of consistent and enlightened zeal for the cause of freedom, is evident from the insane violence of his wrath at the final overthrow of Napoleon; the permanence of whose dynasty must have reduced the future liberties of Europe to a worthless and shadowy reversion. Of his *speculations* on religion, (if they can deserve so respectable a name,) it would be almost absurd to speak. To the very last he seemed to be blown about with every wind of opinion.

"To say the truth," he confessed, "I find it equally difficult to know what to believe in this world, and what not to believe. There are as many plausible reasons for inducing me to die a bigot, as there have been to make me hitherto live a free-thinker."
—P. 129.

It is pretty clear that he never attentively studied the evidences of our faith; and it may reasonably be doubted, whether he had patience for that, or any other painful course of investigation. And then, what can be more intolerable than to hear a man disclaiming all hostility to religion, while his life and writings were, in spite of loud and incessant remonstrance, such as almost any religion must have condemned? We can scarcely imagine an object more entitled to tenderness—yea, to reverence and honour—than a sincere ingenuous inquirer after truth, whose life, in the main, is right, while his opinions are yet wavering or oblique. But what can be said for an arrogant and scoffing profligate—an apostle of wickedness—a fanatic in impiety—one who labours under a positive incontinence of his infidel opinions, and seems bent on making the rest of mankind parties to his own profaneness? No, no, no: it will never do to number Byron among the amiable victims of involuntary unbelief. Such men have about them a kindliness and candour, which will prompt them to keep their torments, for the most part, to themselves. They will never delight in exposing their “wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores,” to the public gaze. They will take no pleasure in seeing the spread of the infection. They will be anxious to prevent their leprosy from extending itself. They will shudder at the thought of rushing into the midst of crowds hitherto free from the contagion. They will constantly bear in mind that a time may come when the plague shall depart from them; and they will remember that the prevalence of their disease must render the world one vast lazaret-house, one scene of universal despair to themselves, even should they ever be mercifully visited by a season of convalescence. Byron saw and felt nothing of all this. He well knew, indeed, the bitterness of his own heart; but he cared not if its overflowings

should carry poison and agony into bosoms, hitherto the abodes of health, and peace, and joy.

That he had in his nature some prime rudiments of greatness it would be absurd to question. There is, however, one indication of genuine grandeur of which he was wholly destitute: he was without that serenity and simplicity which are the surest marks of a commanding spirit. He never exhibited that repose which is among the most awful and sublime symptoms of conscious strength. His mind was in a perpetual state of fermentation and unrest; and, though it may appear a hard and bitter saying, we have very little doubt that a tremendous intensity of selfishness was the principle which occasioned this incessant and boiling commotion. In souls of the very highest order there is little of this "double, double, toil and trouble." There is nothing in them which reminds us of the cauldron of sorcery, with its vile ingredients and its infernal "gruel." The might of the ocean depths, in their stern and calm magnificence, is the proper image of such supreme intelligences. There was that in the temper of Byron, which rendered this sublime exhibition absolutely impossible. There were in him such elements of agitation and turmoil as were alike fatal to his happiness and to his glory.

Our words are well nigh ended; and, for aught we can tell, there may be numbers who will be ready to exclaim, that they are just such words as might be expected from "scoundrel priests," or abusive and virulent old wives. Why, it will be asked, this ungenerous and uncharitable blazon of the failings and transgressions of a mighty spirit? Why this ruthless dragging forth of the vices of a great mind from the "dread abode" of the sepulchre? To all who may put this question to us, we shall only reply, by telling them to ask it of his biographer. We could have been well content to admire all that was truly

admirable in his writings—to avert our eyes, as much as might be, from all that was odious and pernicious there—to gaze on the dazzling miracles of his genius—and to banish from our thoughts the black and fetid smoke out of which they too often issued forth. We could have been well content to look upward at the blazing glories of the volcano, without a wish to explore the secrets of its foul and sulphurous entrails. We could have been content, in short, to think only of the poet, and to forget the man. But his friend and chronicler was not content to have it so. It is he who has chosen to rake and stir from its depths this noisome Camarina; and since it has been his pleasure so to do, it is the duty of all who tender the public health, to counteract and neutralize its steaming pestilence, with the most pungent and drastic fumigations which their moral alchemy can possibly supply. “Peace” was the only wish which Byron desired to have inscribed upon his tomb; and this wish is denied him by his officious and fanatical admirers. And if they will break his repose,—if they will *disquiet him, to bring him up*,—they must not look to have him greeted as “a spirit of health,” at least by those who desire to be, themselves, visited by “airs from heaven.” The name of Byron, it is quite notorious, has done more to couple the glories of intellectual might with the abominations of licentiousness and infidelity, than almost any other name that can be produced from the whole range of our literature; and thousands, and tens of thousands have probably sunk, and still are sinking, under the influences of that most disastrous conjunction. And yet, it seems, we have *astrologers, and Chaldeans, and*

¹ “*Implora pace*” were the words of an epitaph which forcibly struck him in Italy; and he expressed a wish that the same might be adopted for himself.

wise men among us, who loudly invite us to look upon these portentous splendours, as if they betokened little else than peace and joy. What then, have we to do, but to call back the minds of men from this treacherous wisdom, and to fix them on the power of Him that *frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh the diviners mad, and turneth their knowledge into folly!*

Of the poetry of Byron we shall forbear to speak. The resources of criticism have already been exhausted upon it. It has exercised the wit of men, and women, and striplings. One thing only we must remark:—he has been deliberately pronounced by Mr. Moore worthy to be placed by the side of Shakspeare and of Milton. Now this is a judgment which neither Gods, nor Men, nor Columns will endure for a moment. Shakspeare, without stirring from his native land, or emerging from a very narrow sphere of life, has, actually, “sounded all the depths and shoals” of human passion. He has spoken too, in the language of every rank and gradation of society, from the sovereign to the artificer and peasant, just as if he had been intimately conversant with every class and variety of men; or rather, as if he had been gifted with the power of summoning their spirits, at will, to inhabit his own bosom: and, having exhausted this world, he “then imagined new.” All this implies a faculty of intuition, which closely approximates to that of a supernatural intelligence, and places its possessor first among the children of men. And, then, if any one desires to see intellectual comparison rendered striking, even to awfulness, by depth of moral contrast, let him look upon Milton, in the midst of neglect and poverty, and blindness, giving utterance to words which are fitted to delight the ear of men and angels, and which it would be the burning disgrace of posterity ever to “let die;” and then let them think of the sickening, jaded, and shattered sensualist, in

OF LORD BYRON.

the Capreæ of his Italian exile—rebel to God and slanderer of God's creatures—infesting the world with the outpourings of blasphemy and vice, and courting immortal infamy in the cantos of Don Juan.

THE END.

GILBERT & RIVINGTON, Printers, St. John's Square, London.

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